

September 22, 2020

The Honorable Governor Ned Lamont
Office of the Governor
210 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

CT Department of Transportation
CTDOT Commissioner Joseph Giuletti
2800 Berlin Turnpike
P.O. Box 317546
Newington, CT 06131-7546

Capital Region Development Authority
Michael Freimuth, Executive Director
100 Columbus Blvd
Hartford, CT 06103

Senator Martin M. Looney, President Pro Tempore of the State Senate
Legislative Office Building
Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Joe Aresimowicz, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 4105
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Senator Carlo Leone, Transportation Committee Co-Chair
Legislative Office Building
Room 3500
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Representative Roland Lemar, Transportation Committee Co-Chair
Legislative Office Building, Room 2103
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Subject: Pressing Capital Region Infrastructure Needs and Opportunities

Dear Governor Lamont:

The Capitol Region Council of Governments, on behalf of our 38 towns and 1 million residents, is writing to reiterate the need to address critical infrastructure improvements in the region. While this letter does not address all the infrastructure needs of the metropolitan region, it identifies a group of critical issues at the core of the largest metropolitan region in the state. Addressing these issues will have a positive impact on the entire metropolitan region.

Here are several of the outstanding challenges:

- The I-84 and I-91 interchange is ranked as the 11th biggest bottleneck in the country, the second biggest in New England and first in Connecticut.
- The Aetna Viaduct has outlived its useful life.
- The north end of the City of Hartford is cut off from the rest of the city by the current freeways. This part of Hartford is struggling because it is cut off from downtown businesses by a multi-lane, elevated freeway.
- The Connecticut River, one of our top assets is blocked by another interstate highway, I-91. A large part of the City of Hartford and the Town of East Hartford are blocked from the riverfront. There is a need to reclaim the land and use it for economic growth and improvements to quality of life for residents by connecting assets like the Coltsville National Historical Park to the river.
- The Hartford and East Hartford levee system is in danger of failing. Most people do not realize that the levees protecting Hartford and East Hartford are threatened by sand piping. Sand piping causes erosion underneath the dikes that can lead to collapse. This is the same phenomenon that caused levees to collapse in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. This vulnerability needs to be addressed as we are at a higher risk if we do not address the weakness of the levies.
- Rail tracks in the region do not meet national rail freight standards. These tracks require improvements including the completion of double-tracking, upgrading the full line to handle 286,000-lbs gross vehicle weight, and eliminating height and width restrictions in and around Hartford. These improvements would also allow for improved passenger rail service on the CTrail Hartford Line, whose current schedule is hindered by incomplete double-tracking north of Hartford.

In responding to these challenges, we strongly suggest addressing these principles:

- Reunite the City of Hartford
- Recapture the riverfront
- Reinforce the levee system
- Reduce the impact of the “mix master” interchange in East Hartford
- Ease highway congestion and calm city traffic
- Accommodate and improve multiple modes of transportation, e.g. pedestrian, bicycle, bus rapid transit, and rail in the region

Meeting these objectives could free up acres of land for economic development, recreation and green space and allow us to accelerate revitalization of the metropolitan

region. Working together, we can rebuild metropolitan Hartford's infrastructure and revitalize the region for future generations. These challenges present us with a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform the Greater Hartford region. The increased mobility and stronger urban core that will result from these improvements will have ripple effects throughout the region, creating a more cohesive and attractive labor market.

If major infrastructure investments at the federal level become available, the work currently being undertaken by CTDOT to advance the Greater Hartford Mobility Study will help us realize this opportunity. To be ready for that opportunity, however, the process should be expedited, and the state should begin working with the federal delegation to identify this work as our priority and seek federal assistance over the next months. To begin to rebuild our infrastructure and put people back to work, we need to be prepared to take full advantage when resources become available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marcia A. Leclerc". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "L".

Marcia Leclerc, Chair CRCOG, Mayor East Hartford