



CRCOG Weekly Legislative Report

2020 Legislative Session

February 14, 2020

Weekly Legislative Feature Issues:

The first full week of the legislative session began with the Appropriations Committee began to have public hearings on Governor Lamont's recently released 2020 budget adjustment proposal. The budget proposal keeps taxes mostly flat and shores up Connecticut's reserves close to \$2.8 billion which would be the largest in Connecticut's history. The \$22.3 billion budget reflects an overall increase of approximately 0.063%. There would be a tax increase for electronic cigarettes while banning flavored products, including menthol.

The CT Conference of Municipalities, the statewide municipal advocacy agency, stated that "The proposed budget provides predictability to those counting on it most – city and town leaders and tax-paying families and businesses". Municipal aid remains relatively intact and allows for a previously approved increase of \$50 million in Educational Cost Share funding. There is still an ongoing discussion about an anticipated vote on toll's and an eventual bond package which would include grants for towns. As of this week, a date has not yet been set for session to take place for a vote on toll's or a bond package.

This past week has revealed new developments of particular interest to you:

Connecticut Train Riders Now Have an App for Tickets

An app allowing commuters to purchase tickets for the CTrail Hartford Line and Shore Line East using their smartphones has been launched in Connecticut. Utilizing the CTrail eTix app, tickets can be purchased by passengers using a credit or debit card and then stored electronically on their device. The mobile ticket can then be accessed via the app and activated prior to boarding their train. Once the ticket is activated passengers can show the conductor their ticket using their mobile phone and gain access onto the rail line. The app allows passengers to purchase tickets for Shore Line East and Hartford line, with optional connecting service on New Haven Line. According to Gov. Ned Lamont, the focus of CTrail eTix is to encourage the use of public transit and make commuting via trains and buses more attractive. In April of 2019, a beta version of the application was piloted by the DOT with a selected group of CTrail passengers who were able to purchase their tickets and use the app to board CTrail trains. According to officials, during its testing phase the app was rated highly by participants. The CTrail eTix app can be downloaded from Apple's App Store and Google's Play Store.

[CTNewsJunkie: Connecticut Train Riders Now Have An App For Tickets](#)

Lamont Defends Transportation Plan

On Wednesday Gov. Lemont stood his ground on defending his transportation plan that aims to introduce truck only tolls within the state of Connecticut. Lamont's Proposal would add two toll gantries in Waterbury and one in Southbury. One gantry would be located on I-84 over the Housatonic River on the Rochambeau Bridge, another located at the Mixmaster that intersects Routes 84 and 8 in

Waterbury, and then one on Route 8 south of I-84 in Waterbury. Lawmakers in Waterbury are concerned about the number of gantries that would be located in Waterbury compared to the rest of the state. Rep. Gerald Reyes, D- Waterbury, says he supports tolling all vehicles and is in favor of truck-only tolls, but doesn't agree that Greater Waterbury should have 25% of the 12 toll gantries. Eric Albert the president of Albert Bros Inc. said that the additional gantries in Waterbury would cost his business an extra \$100,000 to operate. According to Lamont, the money from the tolls collected at the gantries would be used to maintain that specific road or bridge. The money will be diverted right back into the community and will not impact day to day drives and instead it's going to improve their lives overtime. While the biggest focus on Lamont's transportation plan has been about tolls, the Governor has expressed interest in expanding rail systems to open up the valley and bring Waterbury back into the central heart of the CT economy.

[CTNewsJunkie: Lamont Defends Transportation Plan](#)

Dems: Truck Tolls vote next week. But there's this one thing

Democrats in the House and Senate chambers of Connecticut's State Legislature have the required number of votes to pass Governor Lamont's Transportation Bill that would authorize tractor trailer tolls on a dozen highway bridges throughout the state. Democratic leaders of both the House and Senate still have to convince their members that the other chamber's count can be trusted. A situation may arise where the House and Senate chambers are acting simultaneously with the intent to bring up the bill at the same time. However, according to legislative procedure the same bill cannot be before two chambers at the same time. To circumvent this, each chamber would be debating and voting on identical bills and for it to become law one would have to eventually be passed by both chambers. The workaround is a solution meant to satisfy house and senate democrats who are willing to vote for tolls if final passage is guaranteed but ushering the other to go first. According to Aresimowicz a synchronized vote "doesn't allow the folks that are organizing against the issue to play one chamber off against the other." Democratic leaders in the house have confirmed the availability of at least 76 House democrats who are in favor of the transportation bill, which is the minimum number necessary for passage. The vote on the Transportation Bill would take place on the 18th, 19th, or 20th.

[CTMirror: Dems: Truck Tolls vote next week. But there's this one thing](#)