

February 18, 2022

State Senator Steve Cassano
State Representative Cristin McCarthy Vahey
Planning and Development Committee Co-Chairs
Legislative Office Building
Room 2103
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591

Re: CRCOG Legislative Priorities

Dear Senator Cassano and Representative McCarthy Vahey:

The Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) serves as the regional planning agency for 38 municipalities in Hartford and Tolland Counties. Our municipal members collaborate on issues of regional interest and concern, particularly with an eye toward economic development and long-term planning.

This year, CRCOG has identified a number of policy considerations that we deem of high importance for the legislature to address. That policy document is attached.

There are two issues which we feel compelled to raise for consideration and specific action. The first issue pertains to the Boston Rail Service. The proposed Hartford-Springfield-Boston rail line provides an amazing opportunity for the state to see a \$10-\$1 return on investment. It would serve as a tremendous economic development engine for the entire region, open up significant tourism and employment opportunities, alleviate congestion (and pollution) on I-91, and serve as a model for regional collaboration.

Given the upcoming influx of available federal funding, CRCOG proposes that CTDOT immediately commit to completing the previously envisioned Hartford Line improvements by restoring those projects into the fiscally constrained portion of the DOT's 5-year Capital Plan. Additionally, it is imperative that Connecticut's legislators and agencies continue to encourage and advocate for action in Massachusetts to address the needs of the Springfield to Boston segment.

The second issue pertains to the likely pressure on CTDOT as a result of the large number of retirements projected for later in the year, exacerbated by an increased workload. CRCOG can help. Just as the state has encouraged municipalities to work together on a regional basis to deliver services, we believe CRCOG can play a role in alleviating the staffing pressures expected to be faced by DOT.

CRCOG proposes that the state permit a PILOT program to delegate the regional planning agency or council of governments as manager of certain small-scale transportation projects or programs, including the facilitation of rights of way acquisition. By doing so, the state will be leading municipalities by example in terms of collaboration and will proactively address anticipated agency bottlenecks due to staffing attrition.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of these suggestions and CRCOG's other legislative priorities. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Jason E. Bowsza
Legislative Committee Chair, CRCOG
First Selectman, Town of East Windsor



Pauline Yoder
Chief Operating Officer, CRCOG

cc: CRCOG Policy Board
Katherine Lutz, Rome Smith & Lutz