

Capitol Region Council of Governments

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DATE: FEBRUARY 26, 2007
TO: CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
FROM: MELODY CURREY, MAYOR, TOWN OF EAST HARTFORD
CHAIRMAN CRCOG LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 6366, AN ACT CONCERNING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVEMENTS FOR CONNECTICUT'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) wishes to express its strong support for Raised Bill No. 6366, An Act Concerning the Implementation of Transportation Infrastructure Improvements for Connecticut's Economic Future.

CRCOG is the regional planning organization serving the City of Hartford and the 28 surrounding suburban and rural communities. CRCOG legislative priorities for 2007 include support for the projects outlined in the Transportation Strategy Board recommendations to establish a balanced, multi-modal vision with a strong emphasis on Transit Oriented Development.

Equally as important as the vision itself is the structure for financing, the nature of incentives and the strength of the administration to implement present and future plans. The state must reduce its reliance on federal transportation funds. Relying on federal funding to close gaps on transit initiatives is not practical as Connecticut receives limited annual appropriation of formula funds and most of these are needed to finance DOT's regular transit capital improvement program. Federal earmarks as a source of funding for projects since initial earmarks often fall short of getting the job done. The New Britain-Hartford Busway was allocated \$52 million before DOT estimates came in at \$90 million. In our regional plan it is anticipated that the busway will form the beginning of a network that extends to other parts of the region including east of the river.

We must develop stable state funding sources for major transit initiatives. Moving these projects forward in a fiscally efficient and timely manner will not only help improve our state transportation system, but also bolster our state's economy and boost the state's overall performance.

The most critical initiative outside DOT's regular capital transit improvements is to promote and foster Transit Oriented Development. TOD is a complicated, yet critical process that requires well-structured support and incentives for municipalities. CRCOG strongly recommends that to support these initiatives, strong partnerships be formed between Regional Planning Organizations and municipalities around funding TOD. CRCOG further recommends that transportation dollars be targeted to 3 to 6 transit oriented development corridor projects that can be granted through a competitive process by the state to Regional Planning Organizations partnering with towns. To be successful, TOD will need incentives for moving ahead and funding to support detailed design, land assembly, and joint development agreement preparation.

Getting projects reviewed and implemented is crucial. With high rates of inflation in infrastructure construction, time really is money lost. We strongly believe that current staff levels at DOT will not get the job done in a timely fashion. The entire state transportation initiative is at risk due to low staffing at DOT and the increased demand for transportation improvements stemming from SAFETEA and the Governor's \$1.3 billion initiative. Slow project review at DOT leads to lost opportunities and unacceptably slow progress on our critical transportation priorities. We must support DOT with increased staff and hold DOT accountable for performance with a set of performance metrics with regular progress reports to ensure the timely progress on transportation projects.

Thank you to the Committee for the opportunity to present to you today.