

**Capitol Region Council of Governments**  
241 Main Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: (860) 522-2217 FAX: (860) 724-1274  
[www.crcog.org](http://www.crcog.org)

### **CRCOG Legislative Priorities for the 2008 Session**

The CRCOG Legislative Committee recommended to the Board the following priorities for adoption for the upcoming legislative session. These priorities were approved by the CRCOG Policy Board at its January 23, 2008 regular meeting.

**Three State Issues for the Region.** The CRCOG region has **three main legislative priorities** for the 2008 session (a number of other important issues for the region are described that will be monitored and supported):

1. **Enhanced Support of a Balanced Transportation Strategy:** Support resources for continued progress for the New Britain to Hartford bus rapid transit busway, commuter rail service from Springfield to Hartford to New Haven, and support for planning assistance for transit oriented development at bus rapid transit and commuter rail stations in the region. Also support advancement of enhanced transit services east of Hartford as proposed in the regional transit strategy.
2. **Providing Incentives for Inter-town Cooperation and Municipal Service Sharing:** Build on the Regional Performance Incentive Grant program of 2008 to make available on an annual basis financial incentives for towns to work together to provide lower cost and better services to residents of Connecticut's regions.
3. **Continuation of the Local Share of Conveyance Tax:** Make the local share of conveyance tax permanent and do not allow it to sunset.

#### **Enhanced Support of a Balanced Transportation Strategy**

CRCOG has two major transit initiatives within its boundaries: the New Britain-Hartford busway and the Springfield-Hartford-New Haven Commuter Rail Service. Both of these evolved from the CRCOG Regional Transit Strategy. The Regional Transit Strategy, approved in 2001, puts forth a vision for a larger transit network that increases the mobility of all our region's citizens and aims to restore the balance to the region's transportation system.

For the **New Britain-Hartford Busway**, a final access study around several key stations will bring this project close to authorization. With support from the state on \$15 million for final design and right of way acquisition, as well as \$11 million in existing federal earmarks, not to mention community support spanning the length of the line, ***CRCOG requests additional support toward authorization of the project.***

For the **Springfield-Hartford-New Haven Commuter Rail**, CRCOG requests support to move forward on the Commuter Rail Service and work with towns on the corridor to take full advantage of the service and of opportunities for related development and redevelopment.

Continue efforts to advance the **CRCOG Regional Transit Strategy** recommendations to give more towns better public transit connections to Bradley Airport, better transit connections to east of the

river, and continuation of the Hartford Star Shuttle downtown circulator bus service. While progress has been made advancing transit west of the Connecticut River, we now need to start advancing projects east of the River, including the Hartford East Busway and the Buckland transit circulator.

**Transit-Oriented Development.** The 2008 Legislative Bonding Bill authorized initial funding to assist in early and later stage preparation for Transit Oriented Development (TOD). ***CRCOG requests that the state continues and expands its funding support for TOD. CRCOG also requests that the state further fosters a strong development climate for TOD through implementing strong incentives and supportive policies, supporting clear, long-term regional transit plans and bolstering its transit agencies, and transit services for an enhanced “transit culture”.***

### **Incentives for Inter-town Cooperation and Municipal Service Sharing**

CRCOG has a long track record for inter-town cooperation and service sharing from cooperative purchasing to the CAPTAIN system. Given constrained town budgets, fiscal pressure makes greater service sharing and inter-town cooperation appropriate. Other state’s experiences suggest that there are significant savings opportunities with inter-town cooperation and service sharing to be realized. In the 2008 Bonding Session, the Legislature approved \$8.6 million statewide for the Regional Performance Incentive Grant program. CRCOG towns, together with input from neighboring communities, in a span of ten weeks put together cost saving proposals for \$8 million covering a wide spectrum of proposals from accident investigation to animal control to a shared approach for information technology procurement and development. ***CRCOG requests that the Regional Performance Incentive Grant program be made permanent statewide at the level of \$15 million per year to provide strong ongoing incentives for towns to work together for more cost efficient and effective public services.***

### **Continuation of the Local Share of Conveyance Tax**

Last session, the Legislature extended the .25% of the municipal real estate conveyance tax until July 1, 2008. This resulted in a one-time municipal revenue gain of \$40-\$45 million. CRCOG sees this gain as beneficial to supporting the livelihood of the region and our municipalities, particularly as it may play a role in achieving a more balanced taxation system. ***CRCOG requests that the local share of the conveyance tax be made permanent and not be allowed to terminate in 2008.***

### **Other Important Issues for the Capitol Region.**

While the above priorities are the three major legislative priorities for this session, there are a number of other issues on the horizon which are equally important to the balanced and efficient growth of the Capitol Region.

- **Improve state agency capacity to process permits and deliver projects.** Continued emphasis needs to be placed on addressing delays in permitting, design and delivery of projects through state agencies. Adverse affects, particularly on private sector projects, deter growth and investment from our region and from the state as a whole. Creative solutions to this growing problem must still be pursued.

- **Expand support for housing with services or supportive housing and affordable family housing.** Last session the Legislature provided \$4 million for technical assistance and planning grants to towns, non-profit developers, housing assistance organizations and regional planning agencies and for zoning and building permit incentive payments. Expanded support of affordable housing should aim toward providing diverse housing options, toward achieving a healthy socioeconomic balance across the region, toward luring back our migrating 20-30-year olds and toward allowing those citizens who have lived in the region for their entire lives to remain here.
- **Continue support for farmland and open space preservation.** As the current development trend is still toward low-density suburban sprawl, municipalities in the CRCOG region are still in need of supportive funding for open space and farmland preservation programs.
- **Increase state support for education to reduce local tax burdens.** The current budget provides for the largest increase in ECS funding since the state's special education grant was merged with the ECS grant in FY 96. Continuing this support and making use of the education cost sharing formula is important in the CRCOG region to strive toward a balanced taxation system.
- **Continue support for developing and maintaining a skilled workforce for the region.** The region deserves its share of talent to fuel its innovation economy. With 20-30 year olds migrating out of the region and out of the state at an alarming rate, and housing costs making it difficult for others to stay, it is important to maintain and to enhance support for training programs as well as developing incentives for staying here.
- **Revise the threshold for prevailing wage to an indexed \$1 million with a single tier.**
- **Improve binding arbitration provisions.** Allow for more protection for town's fund balances as determining an ability to pay would benefit the towns in earning and upgrading bond ratings from agencies. Modifying binding arbitration allowing the Town Councils/Boards of Selectmen to handle the negotiations would be a positive change.
- **Federal issues important to the Capitol Region:**
  - **Reauthorization of federal transportation funding.**
  - **Clean water -- support for cleanup of the Connecticut River.**