



MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 20, 2010
TO: CRCOG Policy Board
FROM: Lyle Wray, Executive Director
SUBJECT: CRCOG 2010 Legislative Priorities

On December 16, 2009 the CRCOG Legislative Committee reviewed and discussed legislative priorities for 2010. At its January 13, 2010 meeting the Executive Committee considered the report of the Legislative Committee and endorsed the following priorities for consideration by the CRCOG Policy Board.

Connecticut State Issues

- 1. No Municipal Aid Cuts.** CRCOG requests that the state to the greatest extent possible hold harmless local aid and school finance including LOCIP and TAR as cuts in these areas will directly produce service cuts to residents or tax increases or both. CRCOG makes its recommendations in light of the likelihood that state finances appear to be headed for a three to five year period of particular fiscal stress. CRCOG requests that the state match cuts in aid to municipalities with equivalent cuts in mandates that match the dollars reduced. Cuts without mandate relief directly impact residents and will likely result in property tax increases.
- 2. Revenue Options for Towns and Region.** Municipalities require alternative sources of revenues that may be shared regionally that go beyond the very narrow property tax base. Approaches to this were introduced in the past legislative session. Options include hotel, rental car and small sales tax shares. Local option revenues could in small part be pooled at a regional level, both to replace lost state revenue and to advance local and regional priorities such as improved service sharing efficiencies. CRCOG continues to support making the local share of the conveyance tax permanent.
- 3. Transportation – Busway and Commuter Rail.** The top two transit priorities of CRCOG for the better part of a decade have been the New Britain to Hartford busway and enhanced rail service from Springfield to Hartford and New Haven and New York City. These projects are moving along well and a finalized Full Funding Grant Agreement should be a mid year goal in 2010 for the busway. While much more can be done to improve transit, these two projects should be advanced now as the foundation for further progress in the future.

4. **State Support for Planning and Implementation Regions.** A good deal of state policy over the past five years – from land use to economic growth to transit and affordable housing to name a few – would benefit immensely from strong regional planning and implementation capacity as has been the case at CRCOG for the ten major service sharing projects currently underway. CRCOG calls on the state to restore the modest State Grant in Aid Program and to look to the planning and implementation regions as partners in addressing a large portfolio of issues going forward. We call on the state, despite difficult financial times to create funding for regional initiatives and to restore incentives to regionalize services.
5. **Municipal Solid Waste Management.** CRCOG is leading an effort involving a majority of Mid Connecticut towns to provide for an orderly, predictable, efficient and cost-effective integrated solid waste management system. CRCOG asks for assistance in moving forward with this agenda and asks that impediments to a regionally driven program not be put in place. CRCOG would seek to have the governance at CRRRA assigned to the chief elected officials of the participating towns.

Federal Issues

6. **Authorization of Federal Transportation Funding.** A federal funding bill is overdue with best estimates of a bill after November 2010. CT is highly dependent - almost 70%- for transportation funding from the federal government. CRCOG will work with our partners in New England to secure a good bill that responds to the needs of a region with aging infrastructure and population suited to transit use.
7. **Continue Stimulus Funding for Education.** The need for federal assistance for education continues and given state cuts might be even more crucial in 2012 to maintain local education on a solid footing.
8. **Green House Gas and Livable Communities.** A number of funding opportunities are expected to emerge that fits with work CRCOG has done on smart growth zoning and reduction of carbon emissions through more transit and transit related development. Some funds will be available in 2010 with Transportation – HUD funding with additional funding expected in 2011 with initiatives such as the proposed Livable Communities (S 1619).
9. **Maximize Federal Funding.** Ensure that State is maximizing Federal Funds such as Economic Development Administration (EDA) regional funding and related flexibility that CT has not so far been taking advantage of.