

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 19, 2012
TO: CRCOG Policy Board
FROM: Scott Kaupin, and Steve Wawruck, Co-Chairs Legislative Committee
SUBJECT: Proposed **CRCOG 2012 Legislative Agenda**

Please find attached a recommended draft of the CRCOG 2012 Legislative Agenda for your consideration. This has been developed with input from Board members and has been sent out twice to members and alternates.

As a past practice the CRCOG Legislative Committee has developed an agenda around a few informal principles:

- Focus on issues that are most relevant to CRCOG members and that are not fully covered by other organizations (e.g. CCM, COST) to avoid “me too” agenda;
- Come up with a relatively short and easy to explain list for meeting with key legislative and executive leaders following adoption of the agenda;
- Avoid issues that sharply divide CRCOG membership;
- Put forth issues that are in play or can be brought into play in the upcoming legislative session.

From a number of conversations, a number of issues are likely to be in play in the short 2012 session. These include:

- K-12 education reform and ECS funding formulas
- Organization and governance of solid waste management in the state, and
- Ramping up regional service sharing and efficiencies.

With the short legislative session starting in February 2012 it is suggested that the agenda be considered for approval at the January 25, 2012 meeting of the CRCOG Policy Board.

Second Draft

Capitol Region Council of Governments

2012 Legislative Agenda

Connecticut State Issues

1. **State K-12 Education Funding.** K-12 education funding makes up a majority of local budgets and is a top concern. A change in funding for education and all inter-governmental aid directly affects overall town budgets. CRCOG supports fair and equitable state funding for local education and requests that impacts of changes on overall town budgets be carefully considered.

2. **Solid Waste Management.** Solid Waste management in Connecticut is rapidly evolving with the retirement of 70 long-term CRRA municipal contracts in 2012 presenting a unique opportunity for the General Assembly to evaluate solid waste legislation and its applicability to current and future regulatory and market trends. Specific areas requiring legislative review include the goal that the state be self-sufficient in solid waste disposal, whether the state and municipalities are best served by the certificate of need process which limits the capacity of resource recovery facilities and landfills, and the requirement that the CRRA is required to implement the statewide solid waste plan as developed by CT DEEP, a cost that is born by less than half the municipalities in the State. If CRRA is to continue to have a statewide mandate to implement the plan then the State should bear the burden of the implementation. In addition, on behalf of its CRRA member towns CRCOG supports increased municipal representation on the CRRA Board by increasing the Board size to fifteen municipal officials from member communities, including ten municipal officials chosen by the participating communities, representing both geographic and community population diversity, five members appointed by the governor and legislative leadership and elimination of the ad hoc members.

3. **Advance Key Transportation and Transit Priorities.** CRCOG appreciates the significant state fiscal effort that will bring the region intercity trains to New Haven and New York City every thirty minutes and five minute frequency at rush hour for the first true rapid transit line in the state. CRCOG strongly supports moving ahead with both inter-city commuter rail and the Hartford-New Britain bus rapid transit projects as a foundation for further economic development and workforce mobility. CRCOG also supports investing in our transportation infrastructure, ensuring a state of good repair is maintained and working to maintain the region's economic competitiveness. Exploring alternative transportation revenue and innovation in streamlining design and construction process will assist the State in addressing a backlog of infrastructure

needs.)We recognize that priorities such as the I-84 viaduct and Connecticut River bridge to name two large needs do not have funding identified at this time.

4. Disaster Preparation and Response: Follow Through on Lessons Learned from Major Weather Events. In the aftermath of two major weather events in 2011 CRCOG stands ready to help advance implementation of any of the 82 recommendations from the Governor's Two Storm Panel or the Witt Report as well as other lessons learned from various state level reviews and CRCOG's own after action analysis.

5. State Support for Effective and Efficient Regional Planning and Service Sharing. A good deal of state policy over the past five years – including land use, economic growth, transit, and affordable housing –benefit immensely from strong regional planning and implementation capacity. As more tasks will likely be asked of regions in the state going forward, appropriate state support for regional capacity is important for appropriate land use planning, support for transit oriented development and service sharing initiatives.

As part of a study being conducted for the CT Institute for the 21st Century, CRCOG is expected to demonstrate areas of savings through greater municipal and regional cooperation and ways to move forward to take advantage of these opportunities. CRCOG stands ready to take advantage of these opportunities as they are developed.

The reinstatement of the RPIP program (CRCOG submitted five grant proposals in 2011) and the CT Institute study of greater regional efficiencies should offer steps forward. CRCOG requests that the preference for 50% more of towns participating in applications for shared services funding be struck. This disadvantages regions such as CRCOG with 30 towns compared with some regions with as few as 4 towns.

The opening of general government services in towns to federally funded broadband and to the Connecticut Education Network should enable more “back office” efficiencies over the coming decade to build on the success of CRCOG’s online permitting program.

6. Efficient State Services. CRCOG supports efficiency efforts in all executive agencies to streamline permitting of municipal projects and reasonable approaches to common municipal problems. The projects that are held up in the permitting process represent thousands of Connecticut jobs on hundreds of projects. CRCOG supports the efforts at DEEP in regulatory “transformation” and efforts at ConnDOT to speed up approvals of local bridge and highway projects as examples. CRCOG has been a pilot for streamlined efforts in the past and stands ready to do again to facilitate greater timeliness and efficiencies.

7. State-Local Partnership to Address State and Local Fiscal Challenges. While at present the state budget is narrowly in balance, the state faces fiscal significant

challenges going forward. CRCOG seeks to participate in a collaborative effort to resolve the ongoing fiscal challenges facing our state and municipal governments. CRCOG requests that state leadership reach out to the regions and local governments in partnership to address the pressing fiscal situation that is likely to continue for a number of years. CRCOG stands ready to participate in collaborative and thorough discussions on spending, revenues and measures to improve the efficiency of state and local services.

8. Revenue Diversification Options for Towns Acting Regionally. As part of the broader conversation on state-local revenues, spending and service efficiency, the option for municipalities acting together in a region to use alternative sources of revenues shared regionally should be considered to supplement the very narrow tax base currently available to towns. CRCOG appreciates the efforts to restore the Regional Performance Improvement Program grant funds with new car rental and hotel tax sources. 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. If there is to be a conversation on broadening of local revenue sources – either directly through local option revenues or revenue sharing from more diverse state sources, CRCOG would ask to be involved as options are considered.

9. Prevailing Wage Provisions. CRCOG requests the elimination of the two-tier system that distinguishes between renovation and new construction projects, that the threshold for prevailing wage projects be increased to \$1 million, and that the project minimum threshold be indexed automatically to inflation in the construction industry. CRCOG continues to offer support process streamlining in the named agencies and has volunteered in several cases to be a pilot for streamlining efforts. Much more remains to be done to move to full implementation of streamlining across state agencies.

Federal Issues

10. Reauthorization of Federal Transportation Funding. The federal transportation funding bill is due for reauthorization. CRCOG relies on planning funds from the federal bill for substantial support. Connecticut is almost 70% dependent for transportation funding on federal programs. Congress has not made progress on reauthorization of a federal funding bill that provides almost half of CRCOG's operating funds. Best guess is for level funding through the 2012 Presidential and Congressional elections. CRCOG stands ready to partner with the state and other agencies in a New England wide effort to shape the terms of the bill to meet the needs of a region with aging and heavily used infrastructure. CRCOG specifically advocates for federal funding formulas that

recognize the aging and heavily used infrastructure in Connecticut and the compact nature of the state that supports the need for greater investment in intercity rail and rapid transit.

11. Livable Communities and Greenhouse Gas Reduction. CRCOG was successful in receiving a \$4.2 million bi-state, three-region grant for sustainability. Much more is needed to move forward on greenhouse gas reductions and improved livability in pedestrian and bicycle access and more transit related redevelopment. Although the federal program for Sustainable Communities grants has not been extended CRCOG has two years to go on the grant we were awarded. CRCOG looks forward to sharing results of a market study of transit oriented development sites and other research with state agencies and the legislature. CRCOG supports federal funding for priming and supporting sustainable communities efforts in the state.