

SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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February 4, 2013

To: Transportation Committee

From: SWRPA/MPO

Re: HB 5547 "An Act Establishing a Task Force To Streamline The Process For Approving Bridge Projects"

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify regarding HB 5547 "An Act Establishing a Task Force To Streamline The Process For Approving Bridge Projects". My name is Gayle Weinstein and I am the First Selectman for the Town of Weston. I also serve at Co-Chair for the Southwestern Region's Planning Agency and Metropolitan Planning Organization's joint Legislative Policy Committee, and am here today representing the municipalities in our region, which include Stamford, Greenwich, Norwalk, Wilton, Weston, Westport, Darien and New Canaan.

It is most appreciated that you realize that the process for approving municipal bridge projects is flawed, and applaud this committee for trying to rectify the situation. The current approach is costly and time consuming for both the DOT and the municipality. In fact, it may take up to 5 years to obtain approval and complete construction of a project, which is unacceptable when there may be safety concerns for deficient bridges. An additional problem is that our smallest bridges don't qualify for funding, costing municipalities more money than large span bridges.

For the past year or so, the First Selectmen in our region have been working closely with Commissioner Redeker to explain the bureaucratic nightmare municipalities face. At the annual meeting of the CT Council of Small Towns, the Governor announced plans to introduce legislation that "will facilitate and streamline the design and construction of municipal road and bridge projects by reducing red tape and allowing municipal governments to focus their federal transportation funding on capital projects rather than administrative costs." It is our understanding that the proposal will reduce the timeframe from 4 years to potentially less than 1 year. The details of this legislation will be announced on February 6 as part of the Governor's package.

We believe that Commissioner Redeker and Governor Malloy have already carefully studied the problems with the process for approving bridge projects. Therefore, we are not supportive of establishing a task force to review the process, since we believe this will delay the implementation of the Governor's plan. Instead, we ask you to support the Governor's proposal so that municipalities can reduce the number of deficient bridges as soon as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Gayle Weinstein

Robert Byrnes

Co-Chairs, SWRPA/MPO Legislative Policy Committee