
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6629

AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONALISM IN CONNECTICUT.

SUMMARY:

This bill eliminates regional planning agencies (RPA) and regional councils of elected officials (CEO) after January 1, 2015, leaving regional councils of governments (COG) as the only regional planning organizations within the state's planning regions. The bill also makes changes to the powers and duties of COGs and their funding formula.

The bill changes the criteria the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary uses to analyze, designate, and update local planning regions. The secretary must report to the Planning and Development Committee by October 1, 2013 on the status of his planning region analysis.

The bill also makes many technical and conforming changes reflecting the elimination of RPAs and CEOs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except for conforming changes related to the elimination of CEOs and RPAs, which take effect on January 1, 2015.

CONVERSION TO COGS

The bill requires CEOs and RPAs to reestablish themselves as COGs by January 1, 2015. Before this date, two or more regional planning organizations may consolidate and form a single COG. Municipalities bordering more than one regional planning organization may become a member of another bordering organization before July 1, 2014.

The bill renames the regional performance incentive account the regional planning incentive account and makes it a source for funding direct transactional costs associated with mandatory conversion to a COG.

Under current law, COGs have all the powers and responsibilities of CEOs and RPAs, including the authority to promote cooperative arrangements among neighboring municipalities related to health, safety, welfare, education, transportation, and the economy. The bill specifies COGs also have the authority to:

1. accept or participate in any grant, donation, or program available to any county or political subdivision of the state;
2. perform, jointly, alone, or in cooperation with another entity, any service, activity, or undertaking that a political subdivision of the state is authorized to perform; and
3. administer and provide services to municipalities, including delegation of authority to subregional groups of municipalities.

Under the bill, COGs may provide any of the following services: engineering, inspection and planning, economic development, public safety, emergency management, animal control, land use management, tourism promotion, social, health, educational, data management, regional sewerage, housing, computerized mapping, household hazardous waste collection, recycling, public facility siting, coordination of master planning, vocational training and development, solid waste disposal, fire protection, regional resource protection, regional impact studies, and transportation. In addition, the bill transfers many rights and duties of RPAs to COGs, including the right to be consulted on, and receive notice of, certain regional matters.

COG FUNDING

The bill changes the funding formula for COGs and makes the regional planning incentive account the funding source. Grants under this formula are in addition to payments made to cover the costs of converting to a COG. Under current law, regional planning organizations receive an annual state grant equal to 5.3% of the total state appropriation, and supplemental grants based on the ratio of their local dues to their state grant. Table 1 shows the bill's funding formula for COGs in FYs 14, 15 and 16.

Table 1: Funding Formula

	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16
Base Amount	\$0	\$100,000	\$0
Amount Per Person	\$1.00	<i>Population:</i> up to 200,000: 50¢ 200,001-300,000: 75¢ 300,001-400,000: \$1.25 400,001-500,000: \$1.75 over 500,000: \$2.00	<i>Population:</i> up to 200,000: 75¢ 200,001-300,000: \$1.00 300,001-400,000: \$1.50 400,001-500,000: \$2.00 over 500,000: \$2.25

LOCAL PLANNING REGIONS

The bill makes the following changes to the law that requires the OPM secretary to analyze, designate, and update local planning regions. It:

1. requires the secretary to consult with the transportation commissioner;
2. eliminates the requirement that the secretary consider regional economic development districts and their development strategies;
3. requires the secretary to consider United States Census Bureau (USCB)-designated urbanized areas and urbanized clusters and Transportation Management Areas designated by the Federal

Transit and Highway administrations; and

4. requires the secretary to consider the current capacity of regional planning organizations to comply with the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21 federal surface transportation law) and any related federal authorizing acts, instead of their capacity to deliver diverse state and local services.

The bill requires the secretary to establish an optimal size for planning areas, taking into account whether regions:

1. contain a USCB designated urbanized area;
2. have a population of at least 200,000; and
3. can deliver sophisticated planning activities, regional services, technical analyses, performance measurement, and asset management.

Under current law, the secretary must determine the minimum size of planning areas, taking into account the number of municipalities, total population, total area, and the region's ability to deliver necessary regional services.

If possible, the secretary must place an urbanized area in a single planning region, though a planning region may contain more than one such area. A municipality has until December 31, 2013 to petition the OPM secretary to place it in another planning region. By law, the revised local planning regions go into effect on January 1, 2015.

BACKGROUND

Planning Regions

By law, the OPM secretary designates local planning regions within the state. In doing so, the secretary must evaluate labor and economic development trends, natural and political boundaries, demographics, service delivery regions, transportation patterns, relationships between municipalities, and regional planning organizations' capacity to

deliver services.

Regional Planning Organizations

Within the 14 current regions, the three types of regional planning organizations allowed by law are RPAs, COGs, and CEOs. Through local ordinance, the municipalities within these planning regions have voluntarily created one of the three types of organizations to carry out a variety of regional planning and other activities on their behalf.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Planning and Development Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 7 (04/01/2013)