

February 13, 2015

Connecticut General Assembly
Joint Planning and Development Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

77

Subject: Support for House Bill 6259, An Act Concerning the Boundaries of Regional Economic Development Districts

Chair Senator Osten and Chair Representative Miller and Members of the Joint Planning and Development Committee:

The Capitol Region Council of Governments supports House Bill 6259 to redraw the boundaries of state economic development districts described in Sec. 32-741 to encompass the boundaries of one or more regional councils of governments.

The change to Sec. 32-741 in the proposed bill would achieve a number of goals with regards to regional boundaries and effective economic development.

First, this bill would finalize the process of creating consistent regional boundaries in key planning areas across the state: land use planning, transportation planning and finally, economic development.

In the 2013 legislative session, State Statute Section 16a-4c provided for redrawing the boundaries for regional councils of governments in Connecticut. As a result of this, Councils of Governments (COG) have consolidated into nine COGs throughout the state. In addition, the same bill also provided for the CTDOT to prepare a report on redrawing transportation metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) boundaries. A number of Councils of Governments and their individual towns have used this opportunity to also change (or are in the process of changing) the MPO boundaries to be consistent with their COG boundaries. The Capitol Region Council of Governments after ratification by designated local governments has submitted a letter to Governor Malloy to redraw the region's MPO boundaries

The current statute, Sec. 32-741(b) allows for the boundaries of a development district to either encompass one or more regional planning agency boundary or an old county government boundary. At present there are multiple regional development districts within councils of governments. In some cases, some towns are in two regional economic development districts. In the case of the Capitol Region, we will be administering or coordinating 3 or 4 comprehensive economic development strategies across our member towns.

This bill would be the last step in creating consistent regional boundaries in all the key planning areas.

Second, the goal of this legislation is to align the regions with the economic development efforts that already happen within the COGs. Transportation is economic development. Service sharing is economic development. Land-use planning is economic development. Hazard mitigation is economic development. The largest economic development project in this country's history is probably the interstate highway system. The COGs have demonstrated success in all these areas that relate to

Andover / Avon / Berlin / Bloomfield / Bolton / Canton / Columbia / Coventry / East Granby / East Hartford / East Windsor / Ellington / Enfield / Farmington
Glastonbury / Granby / Hartford / Hebron / Manchester / Marlborough / Mansfield / New Britain / Newington / Plainville / Rocky Hill / Simsbury / Somers
South Windsor / Southington / Stafford / Suffield / Tolland / Vernon / West Hartford / Wethersfield / Willington / Windsor / Windsor Locks

A voluntary Council of Governments formed to initiate and implement regional programs of benefit to the towns and the region

economic development. The next logical step is to organize economic development efforts along the same lines as other planning efforts. At a minimum, every major economic development project involves land-use and transportation planning and vice versa. Major transportation projects have large economic impacts on our towns, regions and state. This legislation would align those projects in a sensible manner.

Third and finally, the US Economic Development Administration prefers districts that are of sufficient size to create meaningful economic development plans that integrate projects and plans from a variety of disciplines. Aligning economic districts with the newly consolidated COG boundaries would achieve the size and scale needed to meet the EDA's preference. In addition, using the same boundaries as other regional planning programs would allow for easier cross-disciplinary integration of projects and plans.

This is an opportunity for Connecticut to move forward in its efforts to implement effective regionalism. Aligning economic development districts with the COG boundaries would enable effective coordination of already existing economic development activities within the COGs. This will result in a stronger better Connecticut.

We ask for your favorable consideration of this House Bill 6259.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stewart P. Beckett III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Stewart P. "Chip" Beckett, III; Chair, Capitol Region Council of Governments,

Chair Glastonbury Town Council