

WESTERN CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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March 27, 2015

Comments on HB 6851

Dear Chairs Miller and Osten,
Dear Members of the Planning and Development Committee,

At its regular meeting on March 19, 2015 the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) unanimously voted to take a position strongly opposing HB 6851.

WestCOG is not only the second-largest region in the state. We are also the region with the highest transit ridership and, as downtown Stamford and South Norwalk demonstrate, the most successful record in spurring development around transit stations. And we have done so without overturning the legal and regulatory framework that has served Connecticut well for generations.

To be clear, we support transit-oriented development (TOD). We also understand that TOD projects can challenge municipalities, and that assistance from a third party—whether from a state agency, a TOD resource center, or a talented developer—could go far toward making TOD a reality in the rest of the state.

While the intent of HB 6851 may be laudable, we take issue with the bill's language, at least in its original formulation. The bill would create an authority with the power to do whatever it wants anywhere it wants, without any public oversight and even compel local commissions to assist it. (The authority would be empowered to condemn, demolish, build, and own any property it desires, without abiding by local regulations or plans, around any current or planned transit station or stop.) Many communities have worked hard to build and maintain vibrant downtowns and town centers. It is unclear to us how disregarding existing TOD plans, excluding the public, and compromising the security of land tenure will spur the development this state needs.

We understand that revisions to 6851 addressing these concerns have been proposed. These look promising, and WestCOG would be happy to review them as they become public. However, until they do so, we can only confine our remarks to what is in the public record. That is the original language of HB 6851, and to that we are strongly opposed.

Thank you,



Francis R. Pickering,
Executive Director