

February 19, 2016

Esteemed Chairs Osten and Miller,  
Esteemed members of the Planning and Development Committee:

The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) would like to comment on Senate Bill 90, *An Act Concerning Responsible Development*.

WestCOG applauds the interest of the Committee in responsible development. For years, Connecticut has been losing young, educated, and well-resourced people. This talent is largely moving to two types of places: first, to cities such as Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C. that provide a vibrant, genuinely urban experience; and second, to places such as the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Northwest that offer a close-to-nature lifestyle.

If Connecticut is to retain and attract human capital, it must learn to compete successfully with these places. An honest and thorough appraisal of development and conservation in Connecticut, as is proposed by SB90, with a process to carry out recommendations, could be an excellent way to launch reforms to create the urban places and natural spaces that the market today demands.

As part of its scope, the study should include a focus on transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD, which creates the types of urban places that many of Connecticut's out-migrants move to, will be key to any successful talent retention and attraction strategy. Unfortunately, it is also an area in which Connecticut has, for unclear reasons, struggled. In WestCOG's view, the study envisioned by SB90 presents an ideal opportunity to quantify the market for TOD in the state, identify what barriers there are to meeting those demands (is unsupportive market conditions, demographics, a shortage of experienced developers, financing, inadequate transit, state law, and/or something else?), and develop targeted, science-based solutions to lower those barriers.

Should SB90 be enacted into law, WestCOG would welcome an invitation to participate in the study process.

Sincerely,



Francis R. Pickering  
Executive Director