

ACIR

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

Special Study

Special Act 23-13

An Act Studying the Consolidation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Kick-Off Meeting

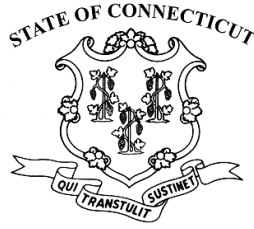
September or October __, 2023 - 10:30 - 12:00

Room __, Legislative Office Building

ZOOM Connection:

Agenda

- 1. Welcome, Introductions, Study Charge and CT MPO's Today** - Brendan Sharkey, ACIR Chair
- 2. What is an MPO?** - Amy Jackson-Grove, Division Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration's Connecticut Division
- 3. Special Act 23-13, Purpose** - Patrick Hulin, Governor Lamont's Deputy Policy Director
- 4. Legislative Perspective - Representative Roland Lemar**, House Transportation Chair - 96th District
- 5. MPO Perspective - Matthew Fulda**, MetroCOG Executive Director and CTCOG President
- 6. Next Steps**
- 7. Adjourn**



House Bill No. 6670

Special Act No. 23-13

AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (*Effective from passage*) For the purposes of this section, "metropolitan planning organization" has the same meaning as provided in 23 USC 134, as amended from time to time. The Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, established pursuant to section 2-79a of the general statutes, in consultation with the Department of Transportation, shall study and make recommendations regarding the consolidation of metropolitan planning organizations to achieve a greater level of consistency and efficiency in transportation planning. Not later than January 1, 2024, the commission shall submit the results of such study and its recommendations to the Governor and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to transportation, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. The results of such study shall, at a minimum, (1) recommend a minimum population to be represented by a metropolitan planning organization, (2) recommend metropolitan planning organizations that can be consolidated or reconfigured to represent a larger population, (3) identify the potential consistencies, efficiencies and benefits to the state and municipalities as a result of consolidating metropolitan planning organizations, (4)

House Bill No. 6670

identify any barriers that the state or municipalities may encounter while planning, and during, the consolidation of metropolitan planning organizations, (5) identify any state resources that can assist municipalities to overcome any such barrier, (6) include transition planning to address the staffing and funding needs of metropolitan planning organizations that are consolidated or reconfigured, and (7) identify any conclusions that can be drawn from the configuration of metropolitan planning organizations in other states.

Approved June 26, 2023

Special Act No. 23-13

AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

The Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, in consultation with the Department of Transportation, **shall study and make recommendations** regarding the **consolidation of metropolitan planning organizations to achieve a greater level of consistency and efficiency in transportation planning.**

Not later than January 1, 2024, the commission shall submit the results of such study and its recommendations to the **Governor and the joint standing committee** of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to **transportation**, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes.

The **results of such study shall, at a minimum,**

1. **recommend a minimum population to be represented** by a metropolitan planning organization,
2. **recommend metropolitan planning organizations that can be consolidated or reconfigured** to represent a larger population,
3. **identify the potential consistencies, efficiencies and benefits to the state and municipalities as a result of consolidating** metropolitan planning organizations,
4. **identify any barriers that the state or municipalities may encounter while planning, and during, the consolidation** of metropolitan planning organizations,
5. **identify any state resources that can assist municipalities to overcome any such barrier,**
6. **include transition planning to address the staffing and funding needs** of metropolitan planning organizations that are consolidated or reconfigured, and
7. **identify any conclusions that can be drawn from the configuration** of metropolitan planning organizations **in other states.**

Federal Regulations

§ 450.310 Metropolitan planning organization designation and redesignation.

- (a) To carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process under this subpart, an MPO shall be designated for each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 individuals (as determined by the Bureau of the Census).
- (b) MPO designation shall be made by agreement between the Governor and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75 percent of the affected population (including the largest incorporated city, based on population, as named by the Bureau of the Census) or in accordance with procedures established by applicable State or local law.
- (c) The FHWA and the FTA shall identify as a TMA each urbanized area with a population of over 200,000 individuals, as defined by the Bureau of the Census. The FHWA and the FTA shall also designate any urbanized area as a TMA on the request of the Governor and the MPO designated for that area.
- (d) TMA structure:
 - (1) Not later than October 1, 2014, each metropolitan planning organization that serves a designated TMA shall consist of:
 - (i) Local elected officials;
 - (ii) Officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area, including representation by providers of public transportation; and
 - (iii) Appropriate State officials.
 - (2) An MPO may be restructured to meet the requirements of this paragraph (d) without undertaking a redesignation.
 - (3) Representation.
 - (i) Designation or selection of officials or representatives under paragraph (d)(1) of this section shall be determined by the MPO according to the bylaws or enabling statute of the organization.
 - (ii) Subject to the bylaws or enabling statute of the MPO, a representative of a provider of public transportation may also serve as a representative of a local municipality.
 - (iii) An official described in paragraph (d)(1)(ii) shall have responsibilities, actions, duties, voting rights, and any other authority commensurate with other officials described in paragraph (d)(1) of this section.
 - (4) Nothing in this section shall be construed to interfere with the authority, under any State law in effect on December 18, 1991, of a public agency with multimodal transportation responsibilities—

Federal Regulations

- (i) To develop the plans and TIPs for adoption by an MPO; and
 - (ii) To develop long-range capital plans, coordinate transit services and projects, and carry out other activities pursuant to State law.
- (e) To the extent possible, only one MPO shall be designated for each urbanized area or group of contiguous urbanized areas. More than one MPO may be designated to serve an urbanized area only if the Governor(s) and the existing MPO, if applicable, determine that the size and complexity of the urbanized area make designation of more than one MPO appropriate. In those cases where two or more MPOs serve the same urbanized area, the MPOs shall establish official, written agreements that clearly identify areas of coordination, and the division of transportation planning responsibilities among the MPOs.
- (f) Nothing in this subpart shall be deemed to prohibit an MPO from using the staff resources of other agencies, non-profit organizations, or contractors to carry out selected elements of the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- (g) An MPO designation shall remain in effect until an official redesignation has been made in accordance with this section.
- (h) An existing MPO may be redesignated only by agreement between the Governor and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75 percent of the existing metropolitan planning area population (including the largest incorporated city, based on population, as named by the Bureau of the Census).
- (i) For the purposes of redesignation, units of general purpose local government may be defined as elected officials from each unit of general purpose local government located within the metropolitan planning area served by the existing MPO.
- (j) Redesignation of an MPO (in accordance with the provisions of this section) is required whenever the existing MPO proposes to make:
 - (1) A substantial change in the proportion of voting members on the existing MPO representing the largest incorporated city, other units of general purpose local government served by the MPO, and the State(s); or
 - (2) A substantial change in the decision making authority or responsibility of the MPO, or decision making procedures established under MPO by-laws.
- (k) Redesignation of an MPO serving a multistate metropolitan planning area requires agreement between the Governors of each State served by the existing MPO and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75 percent of the existing metropolitan planning area population (including the largest incorporated city, based on population, as named by the Bureau of the Census).
- (l) The following changes to an MPO do not require a redesignation (as long as they do not trigger a substantial change as described in paragraph (j) of this section):
 - (1) The identification of a new urbanized area (as determined by the Bureau of the Census) within an existing metropolitan planning area;

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- (2) Adding members to the MPO that represent new units of general purpose local government resulting from expansion of the metropolitan planning area;
 - (3) Adding members to satisfy the specific membership requirements described in paragraph (d) of this section for an MPO that serves a TMA; or
 - (4) Periodic rotation of members representing units of general-purpose local government, as established under MPO by-laws.
- (m) Each Governor with responsibility for a portion of a multistate metropolitan area and the appropriate MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, provide coordinated transportation planning for the entire MPA. The consent of Congress is granted to any two or more States to:
- (1) Enter into agreements or compacts, not in conflict with any law of the United States, for cooperative efforts and mutual assistance in support of activities authorized under 23 U.S.C. 134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303 as the activities pertain to interstate areas and localities within the States; and
 - (2) Establish such agencies, joint or otherwise, as the States may determine desirable for making the agreements and compacts effective.

Federal Regulations

§ 450.312 Metropolitan Planning Area boundaries.

- (a) The boundaries of a metropolitan planning area (MPA) shall be determined by agreement between the MPO and the Governor.
 - (1) At a minimum, the MPA boundaries shall encompass the entire existing urbanized area (as defined by the Bureau of the Census) plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period for the metropolitan transportation plan.
 - (2) The MPA boundaries may be further expanded to encompass the entire metropolitan statistical area or combined statistical area, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget.
- (b) An MPO that serves an urbanized area designated as a nonattainment area for ozone or carbon monoxide under the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.) as of August 10, 2005, shall retain the MPA boundary that existed on August 10, 2005. The MPA boundaries for such MPOs may only be adjusted by agreement of the Governor and the affected MPO in accordance with the redesignation procedures described in § 450.310(h). The MPA boundary for an MPO that serves an urbanized area designated as a nonattainment area for ozone or carbon monoxide under the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.) after August 10, 2005, may be established to coincide with the designated boundaries of the ozone and/or carbon monoxide nonattainment area, in accordance with the requirements in § 450.310(b).
- (c) An MPA boundary may encompass more than one urbanized area.
- (d) MPA boundaries may be established to coincide with the geography of regional economic development and growth forecasting areas.
- (e) Identification of new urbanized areas within an existing metropolitan planning area by the Bureau of the Census shall not require redesignation of the existing MPO.
- (f) Where the boundaries of the urbanized area or MPA extend across two or more States, the Governors with responsibility for a portion of the multistate area, the appropriate MPO(s), and the public transportation operator(s) are strongly encouraged to coordinate transportation planning for the entire multistate area.
- (g) The MPA boundaries shall not overlap with each other.
- (h) Where part of an urbanized area served by one MPO extends into an adjacent MPA, the MPOs shall, at a minimum, establish written agreements that clearly identify areas of coordination and the division of transportation planning responsibilities among and between the MPOs. Alternatively, the MPOs may adjust their existing boundaries so that the entire urbanized area lies within only one MPA. Boundary adjustments that change the composition of the MPO may require redesignation of one or more such MPOs.
- (i) The MPO (in cooperation with the State and public transportation operator(s)) shall review the MPA boundaries after each Census to determine if existing MPA boundaries meet the minimum statutory requirements for new and updated urbanized area(s), and shall adjust them as necessary. As appropriate, additional adjustments should be made to reflect the most

Federal Regulations

comprehensive boundary to foster an effective planning process that ensures connectivity between modes, improves access to modal systems, and promotes efficient overall transportation investment strategies.

- (j) Following MPA boundary approval by the MPO and the Governor, the MPA boundary descriptions shall be provided for informational purposes to the FHWA and the FTA. The MPA boundary descriptions shall be submitted either as a geo-spatial database or described in sufficient detail to enable the boundaries to be accurately delineated on a map.

AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS.

To implement the Governor's budget recommendations.

Introduced by:

REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR PURSUANT TO JOINT RULE 9

New today 2-4 days old 5 days & older

Text of Bill
Special Act No. 23-13 [doc]
File No. 403 [doc]
TRA Joint Favorable [doc]
Governor's Bill [doc]

Committee Actions
TRA Joint Fav. Rpt
TRA Vote Tally Sheet (Joint Favorable)

Fiscal Notes
Fiscal Note For File Copy 403

Votes
Senate Roll Call Vote 366
House Roll Call Vote 99

Bill Analyses
Bill Analysis For File Copy 403

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Bill History

Date ↕		Action Taken ↕
6/26/2023		Signed by the Governor
6/14/2023		Transmitted by Secretary of the State to Governor
6/14/2023		Transmitted to the Secretary of State
6/12/2023	(LCO)	Special Act 23-13
6/5/2023		In Concurrence
6/5/2023		Senate Passed
6/5/2023		Senate Passed
5/12/2023		Senate Calendar Number 498
5/12/2023		Favorable Report, Tabled for the Calendar, Senate
5/10/2023		House Passed
4/4/2023	(LCO)	File Number 403
4/4/2023		House Calendar Number 266
4/4/2023		Favorable Report, Tabled for the Calendar, House
4/4/2023	(LCO)	Reported Out of Legislative Commissioners' Office
3/29/2023	(LCO)	Referred to Office of Legislative Research and Office of Fiscal Analysis 04/03/23 5:00 PM
3/20/2023	(LCO)	Filed with Legislative Commissioners' Office
3/17/2023	(TRA)	Joint Favorable
2/23/2023		Public Hearing 02/27
2/9/2023		Referred to Joint Committee on Transportation

Co-sponsors of HB-6670

Rep. Jonathan Steinberg, 136th Dist.
Rep. Jason Rojas, 9th Dist.

Rep. Tom Delnicki, 14th Dist.

Commissioner Eucalitto

HB 6670, AN ACT

STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS.

“This is Governor Ned Lamont's proposed Bill tasking the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations with studying our State's MPO structure, which is Metropolitan Planning Organization structure, and whether consolidation may result in consistency and efficiencies in the transportation planning process.

If you don't know, MPOs are the federally recognized regionally planning entities in the transportation space. Their purpose is to conduct transportation planning on a regional level. However, many experts believe that some of our MPOs may be too small to cover. They cover too small a territory to effectively conduct transportation planning along significant corridors.

For instance, Connecticut's heavily congested I-95 corridor between Greenwich and New Haven is split up between three different MPOs, which could limit their ability to do transportation planning on a corridor-level basis.”

Francis Pickering, WESTCOG

The third bill I will speak to today is House Bill 6670. That bill would commission ACIR in conjunction with the Connecticut Department of Transportation to study the boundaries of Metropolitan Planning Organization.

CLERK: Excuse me Mr. Pickering, you're at the three-minute marker.

FRANCIS PICKERING: And I'm happy to answer questions about that Bill.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Mr. Pickering, for your testimony today. Just to highlight one specific issue, I'm gonna ask you a question about another one, so don't get too worried.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): In respect to the establishment of Commission to study the boundaries of MPOs, I don't know that I am particularly threatened by the establishment of a study committee or a study process to look at those. What do you think about the Governor's contention, the Governor's staff's contention that Connecticut, we have eight MPO regions, relatively small when compared to surrounding states?

The fact that the State of New York, which is much greater in size and number of and in population, only has three MPOs for the entire State, and here in Connecticut, we have

eight, a number of them sort of almost overlapping. And you serve as Executive Director of two of them, right?

So how do we broach that conversation about establishing true regional priorities when the district itself is so small and hardly a distinct region?

FRANCIS PICKERING: Well, it's a good question. I would point out that if we're looking at transportation, we really need to focus on all phases of the process, from planning to delivery.

Planning is just one phase. With respect to MPOs, I think we first need to understand what the situation is. Connecticut does have eight MPOS. New York has 14, not three. There is some errors in that fact sheet. Nationwide there are over 400 MPOs. The average State has eight MPOs.

MPOs were created by the federal government to provide for a local voice in the expenditure of federal transportation funds. They were first required by the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973. And the reason why they were required was if you drive around Connecticut, many of the places in the country, we've seen highways that were built through neighborhoods, causing vast social economic damage, and that eventually led to highway revolts in the 60s and 70s.

Connecticut landscape is littered with stub highways that in current dollars would have cost billions of dollars, but have not delivered a return on investment because they were never completed. And the reason they were not completed was because there was not the local buy-in.

So federal law is very specific that MPOs are created to serve as a check and balance and oversight over states to ensure that federal monies are being spent in a way that delivers not only return investment but has community support from advantaged and disadvantaged communities.

Because of this, federal law requires that MPOs not only are locally self-determined by municipalities but also that their boards comprise local chief elected officials. Now, Connecticut is average number of MPOs we have. Although our MPOs are significantly larger, but almost twice as large population-wise as the average nationwide.

But our boards on average, have 17 local elected officials on them. Now, if you compare that nationally, the average MPO nationwide has 17 local elected officials on them. So when you look at this, we're actually quite average. There is great diversity, but Connecticut is not an outlier in any regards if we're looking at the performance of the transportation planning process.

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If I may add quickly, we are subject to comprehensive regular review by the US Department of Transportation. Every four years they conduct what's called a certification review, where they release a report on our performance, including efficiency and consistency with our neighbors and the State and federal government.

No problems have been identified in our performance, consistency, or efficiency systemically across Connecticut. These reviews are public. We're happy to share them with you. USDOT has also shared, studied MPO structure and governance on a semi-regular basis.

The most recent report, which is quite comprehensive, came out in 2017. I was involved in some of the work behind that report and continue to be involved at the federal level in this aspect.

So in response to your question, I would say if we're gonna look at this, we first need to understand we're not an outlier. Second, if we look at this, we should really take a broader, more holistic view and not focus just on boundaries, but on process, on partners, on participants, and see how we can all work together to improve transportation planning and project delivery in Connecticut.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I think I opened up the window for you to get to the end of your testimony there, trying to make sure that you got to all your talking points on there. I have a few questions here. I'm going to turn it over to Representative Kennedy, followed by Representative Steinberg.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Pickering, for your testimony today. I just was gonna get back to the last bill you're about to speak of. Could you briefly just give us a quick overview of that one?

FRANCIS PICKERING: Well, that was the bill that Representative Lemar asked me about, which would commission ACIR to conduct a study.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Okay.

FRANCIS PICKERING: If I may, I forgot to mention yes. One important point, which is the MPOs in Connecticut work collaboratively. We meet on at least a monthly basis. Many of our planning processes and products are developed jointly. We use joint data products, joint assumptions. It is highly coordinated.

That is not to say there could not be more coordination. We can adopt and often do adopt the same plans, but we also have a very strong partner in the Connecticut Department of

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Transportation. They have been excellent to work with, a real culture change in the last couple of years.

Matt Fulda, who will speak on behalf of all of the MPOs in Connecticut in a few minutes, when it's his turn, helped launch a groundbreaking, I believe, first in the nation lean event with the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

That's the so called Kaizen method of continual improvement, where MPO staff met with DOT staff for a week. It was a highly productive event. It is an ongoing event, and we are implementing the improvements that we identified there and working to identify additional potential improvements.

So if there is a concern in Connecticut from the Governor's office, DOT, or anybody else, the lean print event and process is really an excellent framework and forum to raise these issues up so we can look at them collaboratively and come to suggestions for improvement.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Pickering. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Representative Steinberg. And then I'll come back.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanna say initially I didn't recognize you in such a sober, conservative suit, but it's good to see you, Francis, following up on the line of questioning we've just been having. It's really good to hear that the partnership between DOT and the local MPOS is becoming more effective.

My question relates not only to process but resources. Since in recent years DOT has pushed down a lot of process decision-making to the local MPOs as appropriate. I've been concerned that the MPOs may not have the professional resources necessary to take on some of those responsibilities, particularly especially areas like engineering. Do you feel as if at this juncture, the balance of expertise between the MPOs and the DOTs proves to be effective in your ability to take action on projects?

FRANCIS PICKERING: That's an excellent question. We are facing the same challenge DOT is in attracting and retaining talented and qualified staff. We really have some labor supply challenges in Connecticut. At WestCOG, and I speak for WestCOG, we have an excellent, dedicated staff. We are fully staffed.

But the challenge that you're probably, I think, pointing to is not so much in the transportation planning side, which is under federal laws and NPR responsibility, but in all the other things we do.

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So there are two points here. One is in Connecticut, we do not have standalone MPOs. MPOs are hosted in Holistic or integrated planning agencies. We are economic development districts. We are land use agencies.

As COGs, we are now county equivalents for data purposes from the Census Bureau. If you look at what the highest-performing MPOs nationwide are, they are integrated agencies, whether it's the Met Council of Minneapolis, TriMet out of Portland, Land of Sky Regional Council in Asheville, or the Mid-America Regional Council in Kansas City.

We have a good model because we understand that we cannot advance the State of planning. Connecticut, if we silo land use here, environment there, transportation here. It needs to all be together.

If we're looking at transportation projects, specifically what MPOs do not do is designer engineering, rights of way construction, and operations and maintenance.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation, in my view, does a good job on these. But much infrastructure in Connecticut is locally owned. We're not like Pennsylvania, where the State owns almost all roads, and where we sometimes fall short is in local roads.

If you drive around the State, often the roads that have the most potholes are local. And especially in smaller towns, bigger cities have the capacity. They have the critical mass to develop specialized talent to acquire equipment necessary to maintain more complex infrastructure. Smaller towns don't have that.

We will be submitting comments after this hearing. One of the bills before you today, 5989 with the suggestion that the legislature look at specifically empowering MPOs to serve on a voluntary basis as designers, engineers, right of way acquisitioners, builders, and do operations and maintenance for municipalities who don't have those resources themselves.

We believe this could help move State and federal money along more rapidly, potentially more efficiently, and lead to better outcomes. For instance, we could bulk procure resurfacing of roads. We could bundle rehabilitation of bridges.

But these are not currently MPO functions. They're not under State law. At the national level, however, we see a lot of MPOs saying our municipalities are coming to us with an aging infrastructure and additional federal revenues, and we want the MPO to help us. We don't currently have funding to do that. Our funding, which is distributing a national formula for planning, only covers planning. We literally may only do planning using our federal funding. So if we're gonna do anything else, there will need to be some revenue diversification, whether it's from the State, local, or a grant.

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REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you for that answer. And I think the point you take, considering the confluence of various conditions, the deterioration of a lot of roads that date back to the interstate highway expansion, and the presence of federal funds, suggests that implementation of projects is really a huge opportunity area for us.

I hesitate to make promises about additional funding from the State that would facilitate that. But it does sound like if we wanna address in a timely manner some of the worst road conditions we have locally -- empowering the MPOs to play a role in, that would be very useful. Maybe that's something we can talk about down the road as a way to take advantage of both federal funds and improve local roads.

FRANCIS PICKERING: And if I just make quickly, very add very quickly, the MPO function will always be federally a planning function. We're really talking about the Council of Governments, which hosts the MPO. It's easy to confuse, but having the Council of Governments take a greater role voluntarily in transportation project delivery.

REP. STEINBERG (136TH): Thank you for that clarification. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I thought you were asking to become a construction manager for major roadways as well. You're wearing many hats. I think my interest in this issue and my general sort of support for the Governor's study process is best summarized. You've probably seen this. Transportation for America's guidebook for Innovative MPOs. The innovative MPO, it's called.

And there's this great line that I read early on in it that I thought sort of got to what my concerns are with having so many MPOs in the State in such a small geographic area, whether or not we actually are able to develop true regional policy and planning opportunities.

And they had this line, and I just want to read it to you and see if you think that sort of gets to the Governor's articulated concerns, the general concern of having so many MPOs. And as you. Said, the fact that each MPO you have largely reflects about 17 chief elected officials.

And it says an MPO's effectiveness often depends upon the extent to which the leadership sees its role as serving parochial interests at a regional table, or instead advancing shared priorities that benefit both local communities and the region as a whole.

And I think when you look at the MPO structure as we have in Connecticut with eight geographically small serving, like you said, diverse and large population at an average, whether or not we think our MPOs because of the nature of Connecticut.

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The fact that we are a State with 169 local communities in a tight geographic area, the fact that we have 17 in each doesn't mean anything when it compared it to 17 in each in Colorado or Utah or some of these other states that we've talked about today.

We have 17 in each because we have 169 municipalities in a very small area. Are our MPOs effective because they're bringing those people together, those 17 leaders together to advance regional solutions? Or are they, from a planning perspective, just trying to elevate their own individual parochial concerns at the regional table?

And I think that's where the push and pull of this issue comes from. Whether or not we're advancing true regional statewide priorities, and whether or not our current structure accommodates those needs and desires.

FRANCIS PICKERING: I have found that the MPOs and the COGs in Connecticut have excellent participation by local CEOs, really good conversations, a really good give and take, an understanding of each other's challenges, needs, and regional priorities. We almost always operate by consensus, and so it's hard to see parochialism when everything is unanimously supported, even if it does not benefit me directly, if it does not benefit a small town of Sherman.

Sherman votes for investments in Stamford because they understand we are all in it together. Now, we do have MPO boundaries. Now my two MPOs are functionally integrated. They meet concurrently. They adopt the same plans. But even outside of West COG, we work very closely, for instance, with the Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments.

Matt Fulda is our executive director. He's here today. And we work on, for instance, a congestion management process where you monitor congestion across the entire area, from the New York line all the way up to Waterbury.

It's been a very successful process. We also collaboratively program federal funds where we all sit down together and talk about who is doing what. And we've had large cities in my region support investments in sidewalks in the center of Easton because that's important. I don't think it's the size of the MPO. The resident population is not the most important function. It's how it operates. And again, that's where the lean process could be so helpful. Don't just focus on boundaries only, not don't leave that out, but focus on so many other things.

When we look at large MPOs, historically, Connecticut was in the Tristate Planning Commission, which was the largest MPO in the country, and it imploded around 1980, it was overextended, and there was internal squabbling. You can be too big.

We've seen similar things. One of the largest MPOs in the country, SANDAG, the San Diego Association of Governments, went down in hugely spectacular flames because it grew too large and it seems to be unmanageable. They were unable to recruit an Executive Director.

So there's not necessarily defense of smaller is more beautiful. It's really you have to strike the right balance that works. You're never going to have something that is perfect in every single way. The question is, is the process right now working now? The federal government says, yes, it is.

But that's not to say we can't improve the process, and we are completely open to any suggestion. We would ask, however, that we believe, at least my perspective is that we should not reinvent the wheel. If we have an existing successful process to raise issues like this and address them, let's use that existing process than tasking somebody else with the study.

And I should mention, this is not me arguing against ACIR because I sit on ACIR. This is just, I think the right place to address this is through the lien process and not circumscribe it so narrowly. We're only looking at boundaries.

MATTHEW FULDA, MetroCOG Executive Director

Good afternoon, Transportation Committee. Thank you, Representative Lemar, Senator Cohen, ranking members, Senator Hwang, Representative Kennedy, and Transportation committee members. I sit here to testify in regards to House Bill 6670 the act to study the organization of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the state of Connecticut.

My colleague who stepped out for lunch, obviously had some discussions with you all previous, so I won't reiterate all of his, his points. A couple things I will point out though is that the regulation on MPOs is regulated by federal law, and it's very clear the process by which MPOs can be re-designated or consolidated is vested in the elected officials of the local municipalities.

It's very clear in federal law, you have to have 75% of the voting members representing -- or voting members representing 75% of the population of the MPO as well as the elected official of the largest city in the MPO all in concurrence to change the boundaries of the MPO. So any study would have to look at the varying local hyperlocal issue of each elected official taking part in this process in order to consolidate MPOs across the state.

I would also -- I would like to talk a little bit about a question Representative Hwang that you raised to Francis earlier in regards to the kind of parochialism versus regional priorities when it comes to transportation planning. And while our MPOs from a geographic scale might not be large the coordination and collaboration between each MPO with its member

municipalities, along with the neighboring MPOs and Connecticut DOT work very hard to address regional and statewide issues in all of our planning work and subsequent programmatic implementation as well. And so I don't necessarily disagree with studying the MPO boundaries and looking at the regions themselves and seeing if there are efficiencies that could be generated through consolidation.

However, I would argue that the -- and as Francis said, I think a better format and a better place for that is with the MPO executive directors, Connecticut DOT, and Federal Highways and not a ACR. Nothing against ACR. They do great work. I think they are tackling a number of significant issues that the state of Connecticut has faced for a long time. But given the federal regulations on the MPOs, I do think that not including all MPOs in that discussion is a little bit off in this proposed bill.

So I would urge that if this does move forward, that the composition of that study group be modified slightly to include the MPOs and Federal Highways because they are the cognizant agency at the federal level. And again, I think, you know, one thing that Francis touched on, I think is very important, really, is that planning is the first step in the process and the MPOs were created in order to ensure that local and hyper-local public engagement was taking place during the transportation planning process. Something that had not been done prior to 1973 with the Highways Act.

And that's our job is to really be the first step on the local level to talk with both elected officials, administration, municipal staff, and constituents of each of our regions, to ensure that there's an engagement process that is prescribed by Federal Highways that is fully followed for all of our planning work. And that that gives a voice to everyone in the region and that those voices are then matriculated up to regional plans and statewide plans to then look at how to program the federal dollars that come in. And that process does work very well.

CLERK SAM: Excuse me, Mr. Fulda. Just heads up. You're at three-minute marker.

MATTHEW FULDA: Thank you. So that's all I have to say for now, and happy to take any questions, and thank you again.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you. And I do appreciate the con -- you know, the way you're looking at this, and I think there is cause for consideration at least, of whether there could be greater efficiencies, whether there could be greater regional cooperation, whether we could determine more specific Connecticut priorities on a more regional basis than I think the current constraints of the COGs do.

I do worry that with COGs we fail to recognize significant opportunities. And I think I took Francis's testimony to heart, and I take yours to heart now, where you have developed a process locally where you are hearing from local officials and you are ensuring that there is

greater and more robust feedback at the local level than we otherwise would've. And maybe that is a net advantage of having smaller COGs and you're geographically able to visit each one of these communities, and everyone's able to sort of broadly understand the challenges that a specific community might face with.

If Easton comes forward and says, hey, we need sidewalks in this part of town, maybe you can compellingly make the case that everyone in your region is very familiar with a very specific request that Easton is making, because they've all either shopped in that area or walked in that area, visited friends or family in that area. And so you do have a very regional thought process that goes into it. I just look at those boundaries and I wonder sometimes, are we missing something?

Are we missing a real opportunity to look across these geographical boundaries and really identify a regional asset or a regional opportunity that is otherwise missed because we're not more comprehensive in our outlook on transportation policies. And gosh, I wanna do something. I wanna do something to kind of get over what I think may be a limitation here. And I appreciate the earnestness with which you've looked at this issue.

MATTHEW FULDA: Sure. No, if you don't mind.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Yeah.

MATTHEW FULDA: You know, one thing I would say in regards to a number of the federal funding programs federal government sets the geographic area at which those programs are funded and how they're allocated through their formula -- their various formula funding mechanisms. So something like the Transportation Alternatives Program, which received a significant increase in dollars through the IIJA bill about 70% more year over year than it had received previously. That program is administered by the urbanized area.

So that's something that is based on federal law is already a larger geographic area than each one of our MPOs individually. Those are urbanized areas that are statistically determined by the Census Bureau and those are the urbanized areas that are being used for that specific program. So Francis was mentioning the concurrence of a sidewalk in Easton. That was through a transportation alternatives solicitation that our agency at Metro COG, greater Bridgeport Valley MPO, along with Nauck Valley and West COG coordinated a solicitation of projects across our entire larger urbanized area region. Looked at them, prioritized them, and then brought them to each of our respective policy boards to approve.

So in that case, that's something that spanned three different county governments, three different -- four different MPOs technically. And that process I think does outline the fact

that while the boundaries might be contained where they are currently, the planning work does extend far beyond those boundaries on a regular basis.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Terrific. Seeing no other questions, thank you again, Matt, for your time and testimony today, and for sticking it out for as long as you have.

KATE ROZEN

Good afternoon, Senator Cohen, Representative Lemar distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm here welcome on my capacity as a member of the Commuter Rail Council, and also as a transportation advocate. I've submitted testimony on HB 6670 1078, and 1079. I'd like to use my time here on a couple other points though.

...On HB 6670, as a transportation advocate, different hats I have read the testimony submitted on behalf of seven of the MPOs, all of which are represented by white men. And there were quite a few quotes that stood out.

They are -- this process is explicitly intended to ensure that community stakeholders are engaged. It's important to understand that larger MPOs dilute the opportunity of all communities to participate in the public planning process, and that can be detrimental to the functioning of an MPO. And then finally, MPOs, which are federally mandated to carry out expensive public involvement, exists to ensure that every person in every community has a voice in the transportation planning process. And my comments to that are as follows.

I suspect if I were asked to ask 10 Connecticut residents what the difference is between a COG and an MPO are and which MPO they were in, I would get 10 blank stares back at me. If I were to go into Connecticut's low income, low English proficiency, majority, majority, majority minority neighborhoods, they would've no personal connection to their MPO.

They would have limited and best knowledge of the power and importance of their MPO, and have the decisions made by these groups impact their ability to move safely around their communities and have [inaudible] This lack of community connection is made even more egregious by our modern understanding of environmental justice issues. And it is not the fault of these community members that this connection does not exist.

To tout superior community engagement and public participation feels wildly out of line with reality. For most of these organizations, their public outreach consists of a single survey and a council of public meetings for their most important public transportation functions, like the MTP, which has a 20-year planning horizon. Our underserved residents deserve more than the barest of federally required minimums.

HB 6670 is a modest reflection, and our MPO should view this bill as a gift, an opportunity to look at their processes and resources, specifically those allocated to public participation. And this will hopefully prompt an honest accounting and course correction. We are only improved by making sure that all voices are included at the table. Thank you.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): Thank you, Kate. And thank you for all of the testimony you've provided. I do wanna go into this issue a little bit more with respect to the MPO boundaries and whether or not we should look to model some different types of structures that we've seen in other states.

As you said, it's a very small request at this point to just study the process by which we, I think, have a tendency to rely on the status quo to provide us with justification for continuing to do things this way as a predetermined, well, this is what the federal guidelines suggest, and this is what we rely on, and we shouldn't change it unless we have the perfect solution in mind.

And since we don't have the perfect solution in mind, we shouldn't do anything. And I end up in some circular thinking in that regard, and I do like the approach that we're taking where we'll maybe study this issue for a little while and determine whether or not there are some inefficiencies that we can seek to address, whether that's through consolidation, whether that's through boundary shifts, but of course, we wanna work with the MPOs themselves and our federal partners to determine that we're doing the right thing by with that next action.

So I do like the conversation the governor has kickstarted here. Perhaps ACIR isn't the appropriate place to study this issue. And maybe we can craft internal to our committee a more robust evaluation committee. And maybe that's the right approach, is to take a different look at who those people are and make sure we're getting full input from the variety of stakeholders and consultation with the MPOs. But the fear of making a change, just because we haven't made it before, shouldn't be the reason why we don't take a next step. So I do appreciate your thoughts on this.

KATE ROZEN: I mean, I think we lean into our land of study habits a bit too much sometimes. And I think this is one of those where the federal requirements are not terribly robust, but as you had referenced previously in the hearing, the Innovative MPO guide has some really excellent best practices from across the country on how to engage with stakeholders. And I think in light of kind of what we've seen with environmental justice in these communities that kind of are disproportionately and continuously harmed by pollution, they need to be part of these conversations. And it needs to be an active and intentional relationship building from the MPOs.

February 27, 2023 - Transportation Committee Public Hearing Transcript

And so to whatever extent our MPOs can kind of take this opportunity to look at their practices and expand their inclusivity, I think we'd be all better for it. And that shouldn't feel threatening.

REP. LEMAR (96TH): I agree. Thank you, Kate, so much for your time and testimony here today.

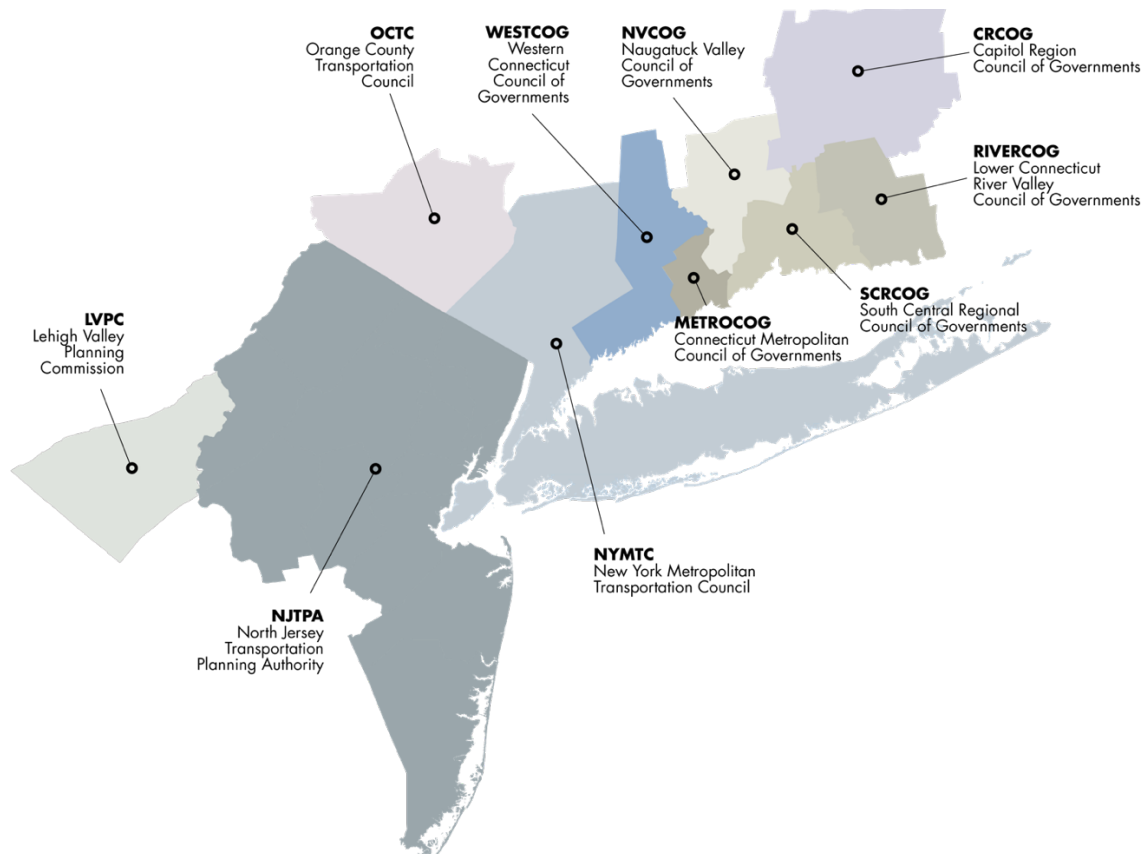


STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

Good morning Senator Cohen, Representative Lemar, Senator Hwang, Representative Kennedy, and honorable members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Patrick Hulin, and I am the Governor's deputy policy director. I thank you for the opportunity to testify, on behalf of the Governor, **in support of Governor's Bill 6670**, An Act Studying the Consolidation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations, or MPOs, play a key role in state transportation planning. Federal law designates them as a critical component of developing the state's transportation improvement program. Connecticut's MPOs, which are mostly coincident with the COGs, are dramatically smaller than most states' MPOs. For example, the entirety of New York state has only 3 MPOs, whereas Connecticut has 8. All of New York City and Westchester County are covered by one MPO, as is all of northern New Jersey. The following map compares regional MPOs with the southern Councils of Governments in Connecticut, which are larger than the size of Connecticut's MPOs. WestCOG and NVCOG each contain two MPOs, with NVCOG and MetroCOG sharing an MPO.



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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

While the COGs and MPOs work well, it is important to explore whether consolidation, with appropriate planning and stakeholder engagement, would result in a more efficient and effective transportation planning process. For example, policies discussed in past years, like the “carbon budget” included in several drafts of the Connecticut Clean Air Act, would be substantially more difficult to implement in Connecticut than in other states due to the small size of our MPOs.

This bill takes a modest step forward: convening the Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations with the Department of Transportation to study and report back to the General Assembly as to whether further consolidation of MPOs is needed and how to achieve that consolidation. The study will consider the following elements:

- (1) A minimum population to be represented by a metropolitan planning organization.
- (2) MPOs that can be consolidated or reconfigured to represent a larger population.
- (3) Any potential consistencies, efficiencies and benefits to the state and municipalities as a result of consolidating MPOs.
- (4) Any barriers that the state or municipalities may encounter while planning and during the consolidation of MPOs.
- (5) Any state resources that can assist municipalities in overcoming those barriers.
- (6) Transition planning to address the staffing and funding needs of MPOs that are consolidated or reconfigured.
- (7) Any conclusions that can be drawn from the configuration of metropolitan planning organizations in other states.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. I can be reached at Patrick.Hulin@ct.gov.

March 8, 2023

RE: In support of HB 6670 - An Act Studying the Consolidation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Lemar, Senator Hwang, Representative Kennedy and honorable members of the Transportation Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 6670 - An Act Studying the Consolidation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). My statement is intended to provide committee members with relevant background information as it relates to southwestern Connecticut where there is a particularly critical need to consolidate MPOs.

By way of background, I previously served as a voting member Southwestern Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO) in my capacity as a Transit District co-Director for Westport. Over the same period, I also served as an executive board member of the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) where I chaired the Transportation subcommittee.

BACKGROUND:

In 2013 SWRPA merged with Housatonic Valley Regional Planning Agency (HVCO) to form Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCog). In addition to its non-transportation regional services, WestCog became the designated transportation planning agency for two MPOs each with vastly different population density, transportation orientations, priorities and focus.

The first is SWRMPO whose member towns have dense populations, significant traffic congestion and air quality problems, where social and economic activity are oriented around the region's historic east/west transportation corridors, and whose overall boundary lies **within**

the federally recognized **Bridgeport-Stamford Transportation Management Area (BS-TMA)**, and. The second is HVCO whose member towns have smaller populations, are oriented around transportation corridors that primarily run north, and whose overall boundary lies completely **outside** the **BS-TMA**.

WESTCOG'S PROBLEMATIC ADMINISTRATION:

Since its formation in 2013, WestCog has unsuccessfully attempted to merge SWRMPO and HVMPO into one MPO that is coterminous with WestCog's boundaries. Such a joined MPO would codify WestCog's control over transportation planning (and millions of dollars in administrative funding grants) for its north/south-oriented domain. These efforts have repeatedly failed as member towns in SWRMPO recognize little benefit to officially formalizing an geographically-oriented north/south MPO when their primary economic activity and crushing transportation needs lie east/west along the historic MetroNorth, I-95, Merritt Parkway and the Coastal Link Bus transportation corridors.

Prior to WestCog's creation in 2013, all of SWRMPO's transportation management and coordination with the BS-TMA were administered within the SWRMPO coastal eight-town region. In contrast, today all of SWRMPO's transportation management needs are administered by WestCog outside of SWRMPO region. The current bureaucratically illogical situation sows confusion among citizens who daily confront traffic jams, slowing rail service and increasingly polluted skies. Connecticut citizens are justifiably shocked that our multimodal connections feel more like something you'd find in a less-developed country.

Of the 420 federally-designated MPOs around the country, most are vast in size and many serve the transportation needs of multiple COGs and are logically connected to federally recognized Transportation Management Areas (TMAs). WestCog, by contrast, in serving two MPOs with over half the member towns falling outside the BS-TMA, stands out as a clear example of how not to manage transportation for a critically important MPO like SWRMPO.

CT OFFICE OF POLICY & MANAGEMENT

In 2013, Benjamin Barnes the Secretary of the Connecticut Office of Policy Management (OPM) made a specific appeal to combine MPOs. In a December 6, 2013 letter to Robert Byrnes, the Acting Chairman of South Western Regional Planning Agency (regarding the creation of WestCog), Secretary Barnes highlighted his concerns for the future of transportation planning when he writes, *“I hope that the municipalities of this new region would consider a further voluntary merger with all the towns currently located in the Greater Bridgeport Region”*.

Given the clear lack of regional transportation progress since then, it is time for all levels of state government to heed the Secretary’s wise words. The Legislature should move past the topic of ‘studying’ consolidating MPOs (which were already studied under the MORE Commission previously established by the Legislature). Instead the Governor, Legislature, local municipalities and CTDOT should take all steps necessary now to formally create one MPO serving the BS TMA, which is exactly what CTDOT envisioned prior to WestCog’s creation.

CRITICAL NEED NOW

With duplicative MPOs and COGs controlling transportation decisions in southwestern Connecticut, no one agency currently has the jurisdictional reach to coordinate operations, websites, capital funding, public outreach and implementation strategies across the BS-TMA. The current organization and administration by multiple COGs and MPOs in the same BS-TMA region does not serve the needs of the public. It results in an enormous bureaucratic waste of taxpayer dollars, is confusing to the public, stifles economic growth and serves to perpetuate segregation in a region already notorious for stark economic inequalities among its residents.

In light of the \$1.2 trillion bi-partisan Infrastructure & Jobs Act (PL 117-58. November 2021), it is hoped that transportation projects across the BS-TMA will receive significant funding for projects with regional significance, instead of merely one-off appropriations for uncoordinated initiatives. The BS-TMA’s ability to attract funds and implement meaningful projects will

depend on how such projects are prioritized, funded and managed by the MPOs affiliated with BS-TMA.

We stand at the doorstep of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure the funds needed to organize, coordinate and manage transportation improvement projects across the entire region. But if we don't seize this opportunity and fix the region's transportation planning boundaries by consolidating MPOs, the critically important BS-TMA as well as surrounding towns will face a compromised future full of frustrating failures. And we will all suffer the consequences.

Thank you,

Jennifer Johnson

Westport, CT

jbarrjohnson@gmail.com

February 27, 2023

Senator Christine Cohen, Co-Chair
Representative Roland Lemar, Co-Chair
Transportation Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2300
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: HB 6670 AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Lemar, Ranking Members, and Committee Members:

The Executive Directors, representing seven of the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), thank your Committee for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 6670. The bill, whose stated intent is to explore the consolidation of MPOs in the Connecticut, indicates that the current structure is not compatible with an effective or efficient transportation planning process. The bill and accompanying fact sheet imply that increasing the population base of Connecticut's MPO would alleviate perceived inefficiencies and improve performance and consistency in the transportation planning process. It assumes that the number of persons who reside within the boundaries of an MPO is the determining factor for an efficient and effective transportation planning process.

MPOs in Connecticut have been responsible for the federal metropolitan transportation planning process since enactment of Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 and have done so in accordance with federal planning regulations and requirements. All MPOs, not just those in Connecticut, are subject to federal oversight and regular, comprehensive reviews that certify each MPO's transportation planning process is conducted in conformance with federal regulations. These certification reviews have not identified any systemic problems with the performance or consistency of the transportation planning process in Connecticut. The MPOs, have been, and are responsible for assessing the transportation deficiencies and issues facing our member municipalities and have been successful in selecting and programming transportation improvement projects that addresses these problems.

The MPO process was created in federal law to ensure the funding programs managed by the U.S. Department of Transportation are administered in cooperation with local, regional, and state partners and address local and regional priorities and needs. The process is explicitly intended to ensure that community stakeholders are engaged, and local governments actively guide the development of transportation projects in their jurisdictions. The process is purposely designed to be partnership between the USDOT, state DOTs, MPOs, local governments, and the public.

It is important to understand that larger MPOs dilute the opportunity of all communities and the public to participate in the planning process, and that this can be detrimental to the functioning of an MPO. Today, MPOs in Connecticut operate by consensus, with few if any disagreements; however, this was not always so. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the Connecticut joined the Tri-State Planning Commission with New York and New Jersey. This structure proved to be unworkably large, breaking down under internal disagreements, and was dissolved and replaced with MPOs that were more responsive to the needs of their respective areas.

Federal regulations recognize this issue and vest the determination of appropriate structure of an MPO with local elected officials. Federal law sets the minimum population of an MPO at 50,000 persons, meaning smaller MPOs are not only permissible but supported by Congress. Efficiency and effectiveness are required elements of the federal transportation planning process. Regardless of resident population, MPOs must be efficient and effective if they are to maintain their federal certification.

Both now and historically, the MPOs in Connecticut work together on all aspects of the transportation planning process. These include extensive formal collaboration on the development of short- and long-term plans, studies, project selection and programming under federal programs, management processes (e.g., congestion, transportation modeling, air quality), as well as frequent informal cooperation. Coordination among MPOs in Connecticut is in many cases superior to that of MPOs in other states.

In addition, Bill 6670 raises several concerns:

1. Preemption of federal law. Creation or modification of an MPO is governed by federal law, which reserves to local chief elected officials the power to structure or restructure an MPO.
2. Inconsistency with Congressional intent. Federal law guarantees self-determination of MPOs and protects MPO functions with respect to oversight of state Departments of Transportation and the MPO role in providing full community representation and equity in the transportation planning process.
3. Misunderstanding the purpose and function of MPOs. A principal function of MPOs is to act as a check and balance on state actions. The MPO process has been effective in preventing the types of adverse community impacts that defined many transportation projects in the pre-MPO era. MPOs, which are federally mandated to carry out extensive public involvement, exist to ensure that every person and every community has a voice in the transportation planning process.
4. Misunderstanding about Connecticut's MPOs relative to other states throughout the country. With respect to population, MPOs in Connecticut are typical by national standards. The average number of MPOs in a state is eight. Connecticut has eight MPOs designated. The average population served by an MPO is about 230,000 persons. The average size of Connecticut MPOs is about 424,800 in population, almost double of the national average.
5. An idea that transportation planning in Connecticut is inefficient and not effective. MPOs in Connecticut conduct transportation planning in accordance with federal regulations and must adhere to planning requirements that may lengthen the process but are necessary to inform the public and ensure transparency. The MPOs also work closely with each other as well as with state and federal partners. This coordination is essential in advancing transportation actions as quickly as possible. Connecticut has been aggressive in advancing transportation projects and fully obligating available federal transportation funds. This success would not have been possible without the active participation of the MPOs and continual collaboration with CT DOT. In addition, the MPOs have been successful in securing discretionary federal funding for member municipalities as well as the CTDOT under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Given our proximity to the New York City metropolitan area, Connecticut MPOs also coordinate transportation planning with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) and

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) through the Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum, which brings together MPOs in the four-state New York City metropolitan area.

6. Lack of consideration of existing initiatives. In 2022, Connecticut COGs/MPOs and CTDOT jointly launched a LEAN partnership to identify and take advantage of opportunities to enhance transportation planning, programming, and project delivery. This process was highly productive and resulted in positive changes in the way we advance plans and projects. This is a continuing effort and would be a more appropriate forum to discuss the feasibility and effectiveness of MPO structure than through a legislative mandate that excludes MPO participation.
7. Adverse impacts on planning. MPOs by definition are transportation planning organizations, but most MPOs nationwide are not freestanding entities with a single focus but are hosted by a multifunctional planning agency such as a Council of Governments or county. This allows planners to consider critical linkages between transportation and land use, the environment, the economy, and housing. This interdisciplinary approach improves the effectiveness of planning and is vital to projects that involve multiple disciplines (e.g., transit-oriented development, which melds transportation with land use, economic development, and housing). Interdisciplinary planning works best when boundaries for various planning disciplines align and, ideally, are vested in the same agency. In recent years, the General Assembly, Governor's office, OPM, and the COGs have transformed the state's planning agencies into interdisciplinary organizations that synergistically integrate land use planning (COG), transportation planning (USDOT-designated MPO), economic development planning (EDA-designated EDD), and data (Census-recognized county equivalent).

For these reasons it is unclear why legislation is required to address the perceived issues expressed in Bill 6670. If there is a need or desire to evaluate consistency and efficiency in transportation planning, the lean process launched by the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the MPOs last summer provides an ideal framework to raise and address such issues, and the Executive Directors would be happy to include such an evaluation to the agenda for a future meeting.

Should your Committee wish to direct the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to undertake a study, the Executive Directors would suggest that you consider the funding, rather than the planning, of transportation and, in general, infrastructure projects. The limiting factor for the improvement of transportation and infrastructure in Connecticut is not a lack of plans at the state, regional, or local level, but rather the ability or inability to obtain funding to implement any of those plans. While state agencies, the COGs, and local governments are aggressively pursuing new funding under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Inflation Reduction Act, grants under these programs may not change the state's longstanding balance of payments position, where it has the lowest per capita return on its federal tax dollars of any state. As an intergovernmental question between Connecticut and the federal government, it may be a good subject for closer study by ACIR. The Executive Directors have researched this matter in the past and would be able to make themselves available to ACIR for such an inquiry.

Should you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your consideration.

Matthew Fulda
Executive Director
MetroCOG/GBVMPO

Matt Hart
Executive Director
CRCOG/CRMPO

Francis Pickering
Executive Director
WestCOG/SWRMPO/HVMPO

Samuel Gold
Executive Director
RiverCOG/RiverMPO

Carl Amento
Executive Director
SCRCOG/SCRMPO

Rick Dunne
Executive Director
NVCOG/CNVMPO

**1620 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008**

March 7, 2023

***STATEMENT OF EMIL H. FRANKEL TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 6670***

To the Members of the General Assembly's Transportation Committee;

I was unable to appear personally at the hearing, held on February 27, 2023, on various transportation-related bills, including HB 6670, Governor Lamont's proposal to establish a study of the possible consolidation of Connecticut's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Through this written statement, I wish to join others in urging the enactment of HB 6670, the Governor's proposal on MPOs, and the initiation of the study that he called for.

As a transportation executive at the state and federal levels, I have had the opportunity to work with many MPOs and to evaluate their roles in transportation planning and capital investment decision-making. If an MPO has sufficient human and technical resources, and geographic reach, it can play an essential role, in planning and authorizing (through its Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and long-range plans) transportation infrastructure investments and projects, which advance the economic growth, the environmental sustainability, and social equity of the metropolitan region and the state, in which it is located.

I served as Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Transportation in the early 1990s and as Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy of the United States Department of Transportation under President George W. Bush. In those positions I was able to evaluate the resources and performance of Connecticut's MPOs and to compare them with such organizations throughout the United States.

In a word, with the exception of the Capital Region's MPO, Connecticut's MPOs are too small, too inadequately resourced, and too geographically constrained to carry out their responsibilities fully and to prioritize effectively those investments and infrastructure improvements that would allow the State to achieve fully its economic and social goals.

Most would agree that the finest MPO in the nation is the one that serves the San Francisco, CA, Bay Area. By way of comparison, that single MPO serves a region of 8 ½ million people. Until recently, Connecticut, with a population of about 3 ½ million people, had over ten MPOs, and the State still has eight. Fairfield and New Haven Counties, which really are a single economic region and "commuter shed," and are part of the much larger Metropolitan New York City region, have four or five MPOs.

This institutional fragmentation inhibits good investment planning and decision-making. Almost all of Connecticut's MPOs are too small and too sparsely staffed from a technical point of view to play the roles that they should in regional and metropolitan-wide transportation planning.

It is for this reason that I joined with my colleagues on Governor Malloy's Transportation Finance Panel a few years ago, in recommending the consolidation of the State's MPOs. My own view is that there should be no more than three MPOs in Connecticut. However, whatever the number should be, Governor Lamont's study is an essential first step in building the most sensible and effective MPO and transportation planning structure in Connecticut.

For that reason, I urge your support for HB 6670. Thank you for your consideration of this statement.

#####

Rozen, Kate - Sustainable Transportation Advocate - Woodbridge- HB6670 Support

To Transportation Committee Chairs Sen. Christine Cohen, Rep. Roland Lemar, and Distinguished Members

I am writing in support of HB6670 - An Act Studying the Consolidation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). Connecticut for its small size has eight MPOs and to the average resident the functions of these organizations are largely unknown. It is precisely this reason that Connecticut is not well served by having eight distinct organizations.

Our MPOs have tremendous power and influence over our regional transportation future. In our efforts to combat the climate crisis and the alarming year over year rise in traffic violence, we need our MPOs to be nimble, inclusive and innovative in regional transportation decisions. They should be supported with resources and staffing to be able to focus on transportation planning aimed at reducing vehicle miles traveled, supporting all users with Complete Streets policies and successfully competing for funding available under the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Connecticut's MPOs should have multiple paths of engagement with their residents, in particular low-income, low English proficiency, those who reside in environmental justice communities impacted by legacy pollution and our Black and brown residents who have habitually been left out of transportation decisions that directly impact and pollute their neighborhoods. This means that a well resourced and supported MPOs can be an active participant in their region by having tables at community events, engaging with organizations in the fields of health, economy, youth and the environment as transportation policies impact them as well and going beyond the single survey for transportation planning feedback. It is a valuable exercise for all interested in this topic to look at Transportation for America's guide "[The Innovative MPO](#)" which goes into great detail on best practices.

This bill is modest in its scope. It seeks to study our current practices and look for efficiencies, supporting future changes administratively and financially. I believe the results of this study will unequivocally show that Connecticut would be better served by fewer MPOs that have more consolidated and robust resources. I urge the committee to support its passage.

Thank you.

Kate Rozen
Woodbridge, CT

**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
VOTE TALLY SHEET**

Bill No.: HB06670 **Amendment Letter:** _____

AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS.

Chair: LEMAR, R **Motion:** SIMMS, T **Second:** DENNING, K

Action: Joint Favorable

**Language
Change:**

TOTALS	Voting 36	Yea 25	Nay 11	Abstain 0	Absent and Not Voting 0	Voice Vote
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	yea	nay	abstain	absent
Sen. Cohen C. S12	X			
Rep. Lemar R. 096	X			
Sen. Lopes R. S06	X			
Rep. Berger-Girvalo A. 111	X			
Sen. Hwang T. S28		X		
Rep. Kennedy K. 119		X		
Rep. Blumenthal M. 147	X			
Rep. Bronko S. 070		X		
Rep. Carney D. 023		X		
Sen. Cabrera J. S17	X			
Rep. Chaleski R. 138		X		
Rep. Concepcion J. 004	X			
Rep. Conley C. 040	X			
Rep. Dancho L. 120		X		
Rep. DeCaprio M. 048		X		
Rep. Denning K. 042	X			
Rep. Farrar K. 020	X			
Sen. Fazio R. S36		X		
Sen. Gaston H. S23	X			
Rep. Khanna R. 149	X			
Rep. Labriola D. 131	X			
Rep. McCarthy Vahey C. 133	X			
Rep. Marra T. 141	X			
Sen. Martin H. S31		X		
Rep. Michel D. 146	X			
Rep. Morrin Bello A. 028	X			
Sen. Needleman N. S33	X			
Rep. O'Dea T. 125		X		
Sen. Osten C. S19	X			
Rep. Reyes G. 075	X			

	yea	nay	abstain	absent
Rep. Rosario C. 128	X			
Rep. Simms T. 140	X			
Rep. Smith F. 118	X			
Rep. Steinberg J. 136	X			
Rep. Turco G. 027	X			
Rep. Zawistowski T. 061		X		

Vote date: 03/17/2023 6:45PM

Correction date:



Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6670

AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING

Title: ORGANIZATIONS.

Vote Date: 3/17/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/27/2023

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR PURSUANT TO JOINT RULE 9

REASONS FOR BILL:

Studies play an important role in constructing public policy, to create a better and more reliable transportation system within the state of Connecticut and studying the consolidation of metropolitan planning organizations can aide in accomplishing this.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Kate Rozen, Transportation Advocate

Supports this bill saying that Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have great power and influence over the future of regional transportation especially in pursuing measures to reduce climate change and car accidents. She adds that the states MPO's should have increased engagement in low income, low English proficiency, and minority communities.

Emil H. Frankel, Former CTDOT Commissioner

Supports the bill saying that other than the Capitols region's MPO, the states MPOs are too small, inadequately resourced, and geographically constrained which hinders them in carrying out responsibilities and properly prioritize investments in infrastructure improvements. They state that there should be no more than 3 MPOs in the state and the current institutional fragmentation inhibits the ability of MPOs to carry out adequate investment planning and effective decision making.

Jennifer Johnson

Supports this bill stating that if we don't consolidate the states MPOs and in doing so fix the region's transportation planning boundaries that we will compromise the futures of many cities and towns by denying them the opportunity to secure funds for the organization and management of regional transportation projects.

Patrick Hulin, Policy Director for the Governor's Office

Supports this bill stating that the study will consider what the minimum population to be represented by an MPO should be, which MPOs should be consolidated, the possible benefits of consolidating MPOs, barriers that may be encountered during the consolidation of MPOs, what state resources could counter those barriers, transitional planning for staff and funding needs for MPOs that should be merged, and conclusions drawn from the configuration of MPOs in other states.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Matthew Fulda, Executive Director of Metro COG

Opposes this bill saying that it's unclear why legislation is needed to address the perceived issues expressed by the bill. He also raised several concerns including preemption of federal law, inconsistency with congressional intent, misunderstanding the purpose of and function of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), lack of consideration for existing initiatives, adverse impacts on planning, and the assumption that the state's transportation planning requires this kind of assistance.

Reported by: Nathan Vieira

Date: 3/30/2023

TRANSPORTATION. H.B. No. 6670 (COMM) (File No. 403) AN ACT STUDYING THE CONSOLIDATION OF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS.

The bill was explained by Representative Lemar of the 96th.

The bill was discussed by Representative Kennedy of the 119th.

The Speaker ordered the vote be taken by roll call at 5:39 p.m.

The following is the result of the vote:

Total Number Voting	150
Necessary for Passage	76
Those voting Yea	118
Those voting Nay.....	32
Those absent and not voting	1

On a roll call vote House Bill No. 6670 was passed.

Senator Cohen of the 12th explained the bill and moved passage.

Remarking were Senators Hwang of the 28th, Gordon of the 35th, and Hwang of the 28th.

The chair ordered the vote be taken by roll call.

The following is the result of the vote at 5:44 p.m.:

Total Number Voting	36
Necessary for Adoption	0
Those voting Yea	24
Those voting Nay	12
Those absent and not voting	0

On the roll call vote House Bill No. 6670 was passed in concurrence with the House.

Vote for HB-6670 Roll Call Number 99

Taken on 05/10

The Speaker ordered the vote be taken by roll call at 5:39 p.m.

The following is the result of the vote:

Total Number Voting	150
Necessary for Passage	76
Those voting Yea	118
Those voting Nay	32
Those absent and not voting.....	1

The following is the roll call vote:

Y	ALLIE-BRENNAN	Y	JOHNSON, D.	Y	WOOD	N	O'DEA
Y	ARNONE	Y	JOHNSON, S.			Y	PAVALOCK-D'AMATO
Y	ARZENO	Y	KAVROS DEGRAW			Y	PERILLO
Y	BAKER	Y	KEITT	N	ACKERT	N	PISCOPO
Y	BARRY	Y	KHAN	N	ANDERSON	N	PIZZUTO
Y	BELTON	Y	KHANNA	Y	ANISKOVICH	X	POLLETTA
Y	BERGER-GIRVALO	Y	LEEPER	Y	BOLINSKY	N	REDDINGTON-HUGHES
Y	BLUMENTHAL	Y	LEMAR	N	BRONKO	Y	RUTIGLIANO
Y	BOYD	Y	LINEHAN	Y	BUCKBEE	Y	SCOTT
Y	BROWN, K.	Y	LUXENBERG	N	CALLAHAN	N	VAIL
Y	BROWN, M.	Y	MCCARTHY VAHEY	N	CANDELORA, V.	N	VEACH
Y	BUMGARDNER	Y	MCGEE	Y	CARNEY	N	WEIR
Y	CHAFEE	Y	MESKERS	Y	CARPINO	N	YACCARINO
Y	COMEY	Y	MICHEL	N	CASE	N	ZAWISTOWSKI
Y	CONCEPCION	Y	MORRIN BELLO	N	CHALESKI	Y	ZULLO
Y	CONLEY	Y	NAPOLI	Y	CHEESEMAN	N	ZUPKUS
Y	CURREY	Y	NOLAN	N	COOLEY		
Y	D'AGOSTINO	Y	OSBORNE	N	DANCHO		
Y	DATHAN	Y	PALM	N	DAUPHINAIS		
Y	DELANY	Y	PARIS	N	DECAPRIO	Y	RITTER
Y	DEMICO	Y	PARKER	Y	DELNICKI		
Y	DENNING	Y	PORTER	N	DUBITSKY		
Y	DIGIOVANCARLO	Y	POULOS	Y	FERRARO	Y	COOK
Y	DILLON	Y	QUINN	N	FISHBEIN	Y	GODFREY
Y	DOUCETTE	Y	RADER	N	FONCELLO		
Y	EXUM	Y	ROBERTS	N	HAINES	Y	RYAN
Y	FARRAR	Y	ROCHELLE	Y	HALL, C.	Y	SANTIAGO
Y	FAZZINO	Y	ROJAS	N	HARRISON		
Y	FELIPE	Y	SANCHEZ, E.	N	HAYES	Y	BORER
Y	FIGUEROA	Y	SANCHEZ, J.	Y	HOWARD	Y	BUTLER
Y	FORTIER	Y	SANTOS	N	HOXHA	Y	CANDELARIA, J.
Y	FOSTER	Y	SIMMS	Y	KENNEDY	Y	ELLIOTT
Y	GARIBAY	Y	SMITH	N	KLARIDES-DITRIA	Y	GIBSON
Y	GEE	Y	STAFSTROM	N	LABRIOLA	Y	GONZALEZ
Y	GENGA	Y	STEINBERG	N	LANOUE	Y	HALL, J.
Y	GILCHREST	Y	TERCYAK	Y	MARRA	Y	MUSHINSKY
Y	GRESKO	Y	TURCO	N	MASTROFRANCESCO	Y	PAOLILLO
Y	HADDAD	Y	WALKER	Y	MCCARTY, K.	Y	REYES
Y	HORN	Y	WELANDER	Y	MCGORTY, B.	Y	ROSARIO
Y	HUGHES	Y	WILSON	Y	NUCCIO	Y	SANCHEZ, R.

Vote for HB-6670 Sequence Number 366

Taken on 6/5

The following is the result of the vote at 5:44 p.m.:

Total Number Voting	36
Necessary for Adoption	0
Those voting Yea.....	24
Those voting Nay	12
Those absent and not voting	0

The following is the roll call vote:

Y	1	JOHN W. FONFARA	Y	19	CATHERINE A. OSTEN
Y	2	DOUGLAS MCCRORY	Y	20	MARTHA MARX
Y	3	SAUD ANWAR	N	21	KEVIN C. KELLY
Y	4	MD RAHMAN	Y	22	MARILYN MOORE
Y	5	DEREK SLAP	Y	23	HERRON GASTON
Y	6	RICK LOPES	Y	24	JULIE KUSHNER
N	7	JOHN A. KISSEL	Y	25	BOB DUFF
N	8	LISA SEMINARA	Y	26	CECI MAHER
Y	9	MATTHEW L. LESSER	Y	27	PATRICIA BILLIE MILLER
Y	10	GARY WINFIELD	N	28	TONY HWANG
Y	11	MARTIN M. LOONEY	Y	29	MAE FLEXER
Y	12	CHRISTINE COHEN	N	30	STEPHEN HARDING
Y	13	JAN HOCHADEL	N	31	HENRI MARTIN
Y	14	JAMES MARONEY	N	32	ERIC C. BERTHEL
Y	15	JOAN V. HARTLEY	Y	33	NORMAN NEEDLEMAN
N	16	ROB SAMPSON	N	34	PAUL CICARELLA
Y	17	JORGE CABRERA	N	35	JEFF GORDON
N	18	HEATHER S. SOMERS	N	36	RYAN FAZIO