# 2012 SWRPA/SWRMPO Legislative Initiatives

## Implementation of Danbury and New Canaan Branchline Improvements

In contrast to the $900 million New Haven/Hartford/Springfield High-Speed Rail proposal, branchline improvements would result in a stronger links to employment centers in Norwalk, Stamford and Greenwich, and enable Route 7 corridor residents to enjoy shorter travel times and more frequent service.

**Objective: Obtain bonding appropriation totaling $34 million to make New Canaan Branchline Improvements and obtain bonding appropriation totaling $290 million to electrify and make improvements to the Danbury Branch between Danbury and South Norwalk.**

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## Maintain Existing Levels and Flexibility of Funding for Transit Districts

Funding for bus operations in Connecticut is derived from over a dozen disparate funding sources, or "silos", some of which are earmarked for specific services and all of which must conform to specific reporting requirements.

**Objective: Require the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation to limit the number of funding silos, and associated reporting requirements. Maintain existing levels of bus service by providing sufficient funding equal to FY 2012 levels, adjusted for inflation.**

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## Eliminate the Mandatory Minimum of Treble Damages and Provide Qualified Immunity Against Personal Liability to Zoning Enforcement Officers

Zoning Enforcement Officials are subjected to personal liability for treble damages by state statute. This provision should be repealed, as it prohibits municipalities from effectively enforcing local zoning regulations. As a result, ZEOs are hesitant to assess penalties for zoning violations in fear of being personally liable for damages.

**Objective: Repeal legislation subjecting ZEOs to treble damages and provide qualified immunity to ZEOs, similar to the protections provided to wetland officials and building officials.**

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## Develop Competitive Grant Programs to Stimulate Regional Job Creation, Economic Expansion and Smart Growth for Small Towns and Large Cities

Smaller towns in the South Western Region have been unable to compete with their larger neighbors for certain grant programs, such as those related to transit oriented development and affordable housing; Neighboring states, such as New York, have successfully developed competitive programs that address infrastructure improvement and business investment concurrently by supporting public/private partnerships.

**Objective: Create a more level playing field for smaller municipalities interested in pursuing economic development, affordable housing and smart growth by dedicating a percentage of competitive grant awards to municipalities with populations under 30,000.**

**Objective: Develop grant opportunities modeled after New York City's "Applied Sciences NYC" and New York State's "Regional Economic Development Initiative" that promote business investment, innovation, and infrastructure improvement and reward proposals with significant financial backing.**