

2013 SWRPA/SWRMPO Legislative Priorities

Implementation of New Canaan Branchline Improvements

Branchline improvements will result in stronger links to employment centers and enable passengers to enjoy shorter travel times and more frequent service. While New Canaan Branchline improvements recommended by the Waterbury/New Canaan Branchline Study are the region's top near-term priority, Danbury Branch improvements being developed in the ongoing Danbury Branchline Study should be supported in the long-term.

Objective: Obtain a \$34 million bonding appropriation dedicated to New Canaan Branchline Improvements.

Provide Sustainable Funding for South Western Region Bus Service

Funding for bus operations should be sufficient to continue existing operations at current levels, and sustainable throughout the fiscal calendar.

Objective: Maintain existing levels of bus service by providing sufficient funding equal to FY 2013 levels, adjusted for inflation, and reduce the threat of budget rescissions creating midyear operating budgets for transit operators.

Reevaluate the Funding Mechanism and Process for Funding Local Bridge Repairs

Local municipalities struggle to perform critical construction on local bridges. The Federal local bridge design process, administered by Connecticut's Department of Transportation (CT DOT), is slow, bureaucratic and costly, requiring up to four to five years to progress from project initiation to completion. Although CT DOT is aware of the issue, legislative assistance is requested and required to support a more expeditious and cost effective process.

Objective: Create an allocated pool of funds to support local bridge repairs, and address procedural barriers that cause projects to take longer than necessary.

Simplify and Incentivize 8-30g Requirements to Promote Increased Affordable Housing Stock for Municipalities

The South Western Region's Municipalities support the spirit of Connecticut's 8-30g legislation and share a common goal of increasing affordable housing stock throughout the entire region. 8-30g, as currently written, has an opportunity to be modified to provide municipalities struggling to meet its requirements with incentives to increase compliance. Opportunities also exist to strengthen the law through extending the timeframe for housing to remain affordable and to provide eligibility to a wider cross section of the general population.

Objective 1: Require set-aside development units to remain affordable in perpetuity, rather than allowing the deed restriction to sunset after 40 years.

Objective 2: Change the definition of set aside development to require that all affordable units be set aside for those whose income is less than or equal to 60% of state median income.

Objective 3: Install penalties on deed restricted affordable units that are illegally sublet or sold at levels no longer considered "affordable" based on 60% of state median income.

Objective 4: Exempt municipalities from 8-30g applications at locations not depicted in their housing affordability plan provided the municipality has a housing affordability plan approved by their legislative body.*

* Such municipalities must demonstrate a commitment to increasing affordable housing through strategies such as:

- Establishing Incentive Housing Zones as defined by CGS 8-13m;
- Establishing inclusionary zoning regulations as defined by CGS 8-2i or establishing inclusionary zoning fees;
- Establishing Affordable Housing Trust Funds;
- Developing zoning districts or floating zones that allow multi-family housing.