

October 1, 2019

# Regional Service Grant Annual Progress Report

*For the fiscal year July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019*



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## Introduction

The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) is one of nine regional Councils of Governments in Connecticut (COGs), established per CGS §8-31b. A COG is a regional body consisting of the chief elected officials (mayors and first selectmen) of its member municipalities. COGs act as a forum to promote intermunicipal coordination and cooperation. At the direction of its board, and funding permitting, COGs can provide a range of services, from animal control to zoning assistance. WestCOG and its predecessors have served the region for over 50 years.

COGs also connect municipalities with funding and play a key role in securing eligibility under federal grant programs. These include access to grants for transportation, economic development, and disaster recovery, among others. Efforts are underway to use the COGs as a vehicle to bring in additional federal funds to Connecticut, putting the state on equal footing with its peers.

WestCOG consists of eighteen member municipalities; Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Sherman, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. The Region constitutes the southern half of Connecticut's border with New York. It is well connected to New York City and other urban areas in Connecticut, including Bridgeport and New Haven. The Region is 550 square miles, encompassing a range of scenic landscapes, from the shores of the Long Island Sound to the rolling hills in Litchfield County.

The Western Connecticut Region is the second most populous region in Connecticut and contains a wide array of development patterns and population densities. For example, the City of Stamford has the largest population with an estimated 128,851 residents, living an urban lifestyle, while the 1,681 people in the Town of Bridgewater have a rural experience (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates). This diversity of communities allows for a rich variety of strategies to promote economic development in the Region.

Regional programs, projects, or initiatives provided by WestCOG

## Comprehensive planning and service delivery

### Economic Development District

A *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS) is required to qualify regions and municipalities for federal economic development funds. WestCOG developed and adopted a CEDS in 2017. It received state approval that year 2017 and federal approval in 2018.

The CEDS was informed by a stakeholder group that, per EDA requirements, represents a broad cross-section of the region's economy, including public, private, and non-profit actors. The purpose of the group, which now operates as the state-designated *Western Connecticut Economic Development District* (WCEDD), includes setting goals and strategies for the economic development of the region, as well as the identification of candidate projects for potential funding. The WCEDD meets quarterly to guide development efforts, including pending federal designation and implementation of the CEDS.

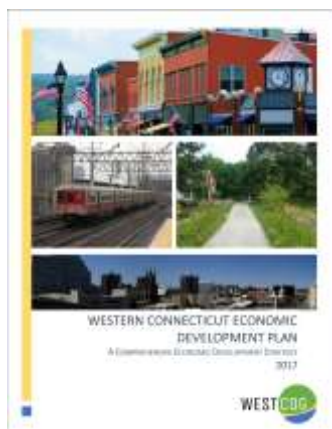


Figure 1. WestCOG CEDS.

### Plan of Conservation and Development

WestCOG is responsible for the creation and maintenance of a regional comprehensive plan, to ensure that development is orderly, economic, socially, and environmentally sustainable. WestCOG began work on the first *WestCOG Regional Plan of Conservation and Development* in January 2019. Plan elements include infrastructure, housing, the economy, water supplies and natural resources, community character, air quality, and agricultural resources. The Plan relies heavily on analyses of statistical and spatial data in these areas, many of which a first for the region, and will include a comprehensive appendix with information and findings about the region. A public draft, with a comment period and public hearings, will tentatively begin in early November 2019.

### Snow Removal Operations, Management, and Routing Study

Through a Regional Performance Incentive Program grant (\$254,782), WestCOG completed a comprehensive winter highway operations study for the region in August 2018. The study included computer optimization of snowplow routes, a best management practice guide for chloride, salts and other deicing materials; an operations guide for recommended best management practices and equipment improvements; and a *Snow and Ice Removal Planning Guide*. This study provides cost savings to the member municipalities by improving the efficiency of snowplow routing and the use of related materials, and by producing region-wide documents that would have been duplicated by each municipality.

### **Municipal services modernization study**

WestCOG is evaluating the opportunities for regional sharing, consolidation, outsourcing, and modernization of municipal processes. The study will identify which processes have the greatest potential for cost savings and service improvements, as well as processes that can be enhanced at low cost.

The study will consider but is not limited to resident-facing processes such as the issuance of licenses and permits (for instance, dogs, beach, parking, transfer station access), as well as backend services (mass appraisal, payment processing). Study outputs are expected include cost benefit analyses, recommendations, and actionable implementation strategies. The study project has begun with a survey of department heads in all eighteen municipalities in the region.

### **Public safety consolidation/sharing study**

To find opportunities to share the costs of operations, facilities, training, and overhead, WestCOG is in the process of engaging a consulting firm to study public safety services in four to five municipalities in the region. The study will consider opportunities for sharing or consolidation in:

- Public safety answering point (PSAP)
- Dispatch
- Data management
- Evidence storage
- Processing/intake
- Detention/lockup
- Training rooms
- Firing range/facility
- Gym facilities

Study outputs include feasibility and cost benefit analyses, a preferred alternative, and an implementation plan.

### **Regional fee schedule**

Aside from the property tax, municipalities in Connecticut generally may only collect revenues through fees. While mill rates are well known, fees are not. To facilitate comparison and benchmarking among municipalities, as and to provide an empirical basis to conversations about revenue diversification, WestCOG is developing a comprehensive index of fees charged by municipalities across the region. WestCOG began collecting this information in the spring.

### **County equivalency**

Over the last several years, WestCOG has worked with its peers and with the State to put Connecticut's COGs on a level playing field with non-county regional governments in six other states. Such "county equivalency" will not change relationships in Connecticut, including traditions of home rule, but will align the actions of federal agencies with state law, which empowers COGs to participate in any "grant, donation, or program made available to counties by any other governmental or private entity." (CGS §8-31b(b)) When recognized as county equivalents, the state's COGs will be able to engage directly in federal programs, when the regions so desire. This will enable COGs, for the first time, to apply to federal grants as regions, increasing the competitiveness of grant applications, and, it is hoped, ultimately bringing in more federal assistance to Connecticut.

## Land Use Referrals

Proposed changes to municipal zoning regulations and maps, subdivision ordinances, and Plans of Conservation and Development, also termed “referrals”, are evaluated by WestCOG for consistency with the regional comprehensive plan and to reduce potential conflicts among municipalities. WestCOG responded to 97 referrals this past year. Land use referrals have resulted in cost avoidance and improved development outcomes.

## Planners Lunch

Staff convenes quarterly educational and collaborative sessions for municipal planners to build capacity and facilitate intermunicipal collaboration in the region.

## Municipal planning assistance

WestCOG offers technical assistance to its members on a variety of planning topics. Help provided includes mapping and analysis for local Plans of Conservation and Development and consultation on zoning proposals, such as solar regulations and 5G technology.



Figure 2. WestCOG Senior Project Manager Charles Vidich presents to planners from WestCOG member municipalities at the July 2019 Planner's Lunch organized by WestCOG Planner Kristin Floberg.

# Western Connecticut COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



## Census PSAP

WestCOG actively participated in the United States Census Bureau's Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP), a once-in-a-decade opportunity for local governments to update the statistical boundaries used by Bureau in tabulations for the 2020 Census, American Community Survey, and Economic Census. WestCOG evaluated and gave feedback on appropriate boundaries on behalf of its members. The goal of the PSAP was to ensure that Tract and Block Group boundaries reflected logical shapes, met population and household standards, and adequately addressed special use areas such as parks, prisons, ponds, malls (large areas, with little population, or drastically different population).

WestCOG coordinated with municipalities, state agencies, and Census to ensure boundaries were acceptable. The new boundaries will be reflected in the 2020 Census.

## Emergency Management Planning

Through regional partnership, WestCOG works with the Department of Emergency and Homeland Security (DEMHS), member communities, and neighboring COGs to prepare and plan for regional emergency response and mitigation. WestCOG falls within two DEMHS planning regions, Region 1 and Region 5, and takes part in Steering and Full Committee meetings and advocates for its member communities.

## Letters of Support

WestCOG issues letters of support for municipal, private, and non-profit organizations for grant applications that are in alignment with the goals of the COG. This year, staff prepared 15 letters of support and consistency for:

- Town of Brookfield, *DECD Brownfield Grant*
- Town of Newtown, *DECD Brownfield Grant*
- Save the Sound, *CT DEEP Section 319 Grant Program*
- Aspetuck Land Trust, *Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program*
- The Nature Conservancy, *Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program*
- Wilton Land Trust, *Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program*
- Town of Brookfield, *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize*
- City of Danbury, *CT DEEP Recreational Trails Grant Program*
- Housatonic Valley Association, *CT DEEP Recreational Trails Grant Program*
- Town of New Fairfield, *CTDEEP Recreational Trails Grant Program*
- Town of New Milford, *CTDEEP Recreational Trails Grant Program*
- Town of Weston, *CTDEEP Recreational Trails Grant Program*
- Housatonic Valley Association, *EPA Environmental Justice Small Grants Program*
- Newtown Bike and Trail Committee, *National Park Service 2019 Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program*
- Northwest Hills Council of Governments, *2018 USDOT BUILD Grant*



## Transportation programming and engineering

### Metropolitan planning

WestCOG hosts two Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), which are federally mandated, designated and funded transportation policy-making organizations. The MPOs in Western Connecticut comprise the WestCOG Board, in addition to transit representatives, WestCOG Executive Director, and State of Connecticut. MPO designations provide access to federal funds, both formula-based and discretionary grants. To access these funds, an MPO must develop and maintain a Long-Range Transportation and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). WestCOG's 2019-2045 Long-Range Transportation Plans were developed and endorsed in May 2019 by both MPOs, which largely functionally operate as one region, with joint and concurrent meetings and shared documents. The TIPs for Western Connecticut are programmed to deliver over \$1.5 billion in transportation investment during the FFY2018-2021 period across the region.

### Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

WestCOG's TAG comprises municipal planners, engineers, public works officials, transit district representatives, and COG staff. The TAG collaboratively reviews and evaluates proposals, making recommendations to the WestCOG board. Examples of recent TAG initiatives include prioritizations for federal and state funded project solicitations, assistance with the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program, and regional efficiencies, transportation performance management, TIP amendments, and other important regional efforts.



Figure 3. WestCOG 2019-2045 Long Range Transportation Plans

### LOTICIP and Regional Engineer

The Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) provides funding for projects on roads throughout the region. WestCOG solicits and develops projects and programs funds. COG involvement enables efficiency in project delivery, freeing up resources at the state for other activities. Responsibilities include application and design review, with WestCOG's Regional Engineer giving programmatic and technical guidance to municipalities to advance and implement critical infrastructure projects. To date, WestCOG has programmed over \$63 million in LOTICIP (SFY14-19). These funds, which are supported by state bonding, have been awarded to 35 projects in various stages of project development, ranging from design to completion. LOTICIP is a successful and innovative program, with projects being delivered faster and more cost-effectively than under predecessor programs in years past.

### Transportation and engineering assistance

WestCOG provides technical assistance to the region and its members. Assistance includes programmatic and funding guidance,



engineering review, planning studies, and data analysis. A recent example include is an intensive evaluation of concerns by municipal public works officials regarding premature deterioration of asphalt pavements. Through this effort, which is ongoing, WestCOG organized a technical forum with participation by municipal personnel and subject matter experts from the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) and the University of Connecticut's Asphalt Pavement Lab and conducted a statewide survey of municipalities to gather additional information. Field visits of distressed pavement were conducted to review conditions and extract cores for materials assessment.

### **Traffic counting and analysis program**

WestCOG installs temporary traffic cameras that collect up to 50 hours of traffic video for an intersection. Outputs include turning counts for pedestrians, bicycles, cars and heavy vehicles. This data is used in a wide range of analyses, including level of service (LOS), pedestrian and cyclist, intersection signal timing and capacity, traffic control type and signal coordination. In addition, WestCOG deploys radar counters to collect bidirectional volume, speed and vehicle classification for up to four, mid-block lanes. This program provides cost savings for member municipalities through equipment sharing and by using trained WestCOG staff to conduct analyses. WestCOG conducted 16 turning movement counts and 5 radar counts this year that were used in project design and safety analysis by the region's members.

### **Transportation Alternatives Program**

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides funding for non-motorized projects, focusing on pedestrian, bicycle and trail infrastructure. The program aims to enhance connectivity, safety and accessibility.

Western Connecticut projects funded through TAP include a streetscape project in Brookfield, and a project in Ridgefield to enhance pedestrian infrastructure in the Branchville. TAP, which brings together WestCOG and its neighbors, is an exemplar of the extensive coordination that WestCOG practices both in the region and in the state.

### **Congestion Management Process (CMP)**

The CMP is an ongoing study to identify, benchmark, and quantify congestion in the region to leverage future investments and improvements in the regional transportation system to alleviate congestion in a targeted, cost-effective manner. Particular attention will be given to projects that can address congestion relatively quickly and at low cost. The CMP supports regional and state activities by including reporting on federally mandated transportation performance measures.

### **Transit inventory**

WestCOG is inventorying all transit, human service transportation and community transportation operators and providers in the region, with the long-term goals of enhancing coordination among providers and supporting a regional transit system that is efficient, easy-to-use, and satisfies the needs of the region's residents and visitors.

### **Regional Transportation Safety Plan**

WestCOG is assisting CTDOT in the development of a Regional Transportation Safety Plan for Western Connecticut. The aim of the study is to reduce fatalities and injuries, increase safety awareness, and outline measures to reduce potential future crashes by assessing regional data and local roads. Recommendations will be made at prioritized locations. Project initiation and site visits are anticipated for fall 2019.



*Figure 4. Members of the public and planners from WestCOG member municipalities give feedback, highlight notable areas in Western Connecticut, and provide information for the Regional Bicycle and Trail Plan during a workshop in March, 2019*

## Bicycle and trail planning

WestCOG is developing a *Regional Bicycle Plan* that will lay out a connected bicycle network in the region. The plan will build on the recommendations from existing studies and will support regional corridors that will become the “backbone” of a nonmotorized and multimodal transportation network, with feeder trails (or “ribs”) extending to nearby local destinations such as town centers.

In addition to advancing opportunities for paved infrastructure, WestCOG has also

been working on inventorying and collecting data on natural surface trails and their use in the region. The data will be analyzed, and plans for trail connections between communities, public facilities, and parks and open space will be developed. Technical assistance is provided to municipalities and land trusts to determine trail alignments, grants, trail enhancements, and feasibility of multiuse trails. WestCOG communicates and coordinates with CTDOT and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) on issues regarding trails in the region.

# Western Connecticut

## COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



### Advisory Committees

WestCOG actively participates in numerous transportation advisory committees, where members share insight and feedback on statewide planning efforts and local projects. This past year, WestCOG has supported:

- Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board
- Strategic Highway Safety Plan Steering Committee
- Merritt Parkway Advisory Committee
- Danbury I-84 Project Advisory Committee
- Norwalk 7/15 Interchange Project Advisory Committee
- Westport Cribari Bridge Project Advisory Committee
- Metropolitan Area Planning Forum
- Multi-State Freight Working Group
- TRANSCOM
- Active Transportation Steering Committee

### Emergency Service Function 1 (ESF1), Transportation

As part of supporting the DEMHS regions, WestCOG coordinates with transportation planners from neighboring regions to develop and strategize transportation planning issues related to emergency management functions across DEMHS Regions 1 and 5.

## Transportation plans and studies

### Westport Main to Train

The Westport Main to Train Study has been completed. Phase 2 of the rail station study evaluated access to the Westport Station (commonly referred to as the “Saugatuck Station”) and developed recommendations to mitigate congestion on Connecticut Routes 1 and 33. The Final Report presents the recommendations developed for traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities for this study. It summarizes the process of developing the recommendations, describes the recommendations at each intersection, and includes a timeline for implementation.

### Norwalk Main Avenue

WestCOG is working with the City of Norwalk on a study to evaluate opportunities to address existing transportation deficiencies along Main Avenue (Route 719). This corridor parallels Route 7 and provides an integral connection between the Merritt Parkway and Route 7, access to the Merritt 7 train station, and access to commercial businesses on Main Avenue. The current phase of this study is examining the cross-section and is developing Complete Street recommendations to improve mobility for all roadway users.

### Danbury and New Fairfield Route 37

Federal funding through the Surface Transportation Block Grant has been secured for the Danbury and New Fairfield Route 37 Corridor Study. The purpose of this study is to analyze physical and operational characteristics of Route 37 and recommend future improvements in the corridor. The corridor is a

portion Route 37, from I-84 Exit 6 in Danbury to 0.2 mile north of Route 39 in New Fairfield. The major objectives of this study are to discover solutions to alleviate traffic congestion levels, improve pedestrian mobility, and to promote healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

### Stamford East Bus Evaluation

FHI was contracted to perform a technical evaluation of the Stamford East Bus service (Routes 341, 344, and 345). The goal of the Stamford East Bus Service Technical Evaluation was to provide additional, more localized and quickly actionable recommendations which could be readily implemented. Recommendations included bus stop consolidation, amenity improvements, and the removal of low ridership stops.

### Western CT Station Parking Evaluation

AECOM was engaged by WestCOG to evaluate parking supply and demand for train stations in municipalities in southwestern Connecticut, including the Danbury and New Canaan Branch Lines. The purpose of this analysis was to evaluate parking supply and demand from a regional perspective and to elucidate any existing economic relationships or dynamics of parking lots and parking demand between stations along the New Haven and Branch Lines.

## Environmental management

### Drinking water planning

WestCOG aided the Department of Public Health with the Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC) planning process. The WUCCs have completed their planning and have developed plans to cover the entire state of Connecticut. WestCOG contributed to the development of the Western Connecticut plan and informed municipalities of the process.

### Regional flood insurance savings program

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS) discounts flood insurance rates for policyholders in communities that take flood mitigation measures in their community. WestCOG, working with the Nature Conservancy, developed a regional floodplain functions plan which can provide up to 100 CRS credits per participating community. The report and all existing CRS coordination efforts are on hold pending treatment of the region as a county equivalent by the federal government. Such treatment would allow WestCOG to apply for the CRS program as a region, substantially reducing administrative overhead and the costs of participation.

### Hazard mitigation plan updates

WestCOG has applied for federal funds to create a shared Hazard Mitigation Plan for Western Connecticut. This plan, which will be the first fully regional plan in Western Connecticut, will identify actions and strategies for communities to reduce impacts from various disaster scenarios, and enable eligibility for FEMA funds. WestCOG is awaiting a response on grant funds.

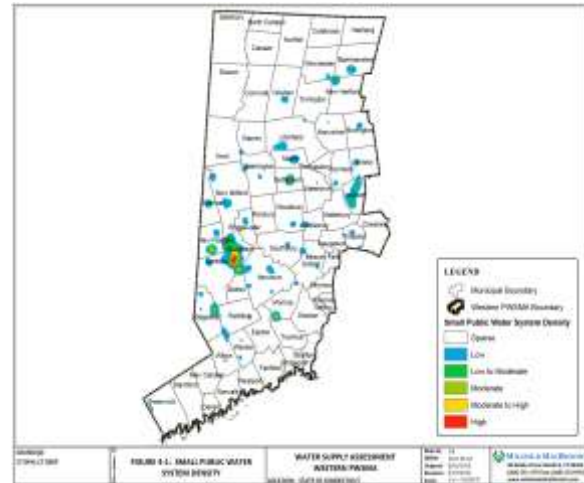


Figure 5, 'Small Public Water System Density'

### Municipal Stormwater Support Service (MS4)

To achieve economies of scale, WestCOG provides MS4 stormwater planning services regionwide. These include a stormwater management template, stormwater infrastructure mapping, directly connected impervious cover mapping (DCIA), and case study IDDE efforts; WestCOG monitors advancements, resources, and updates from DEEP, other COGs, and UConn CLEAR on the MS4 permit. All products developed by WestCOG are replicable and available statewide. In this past year WestCOG worked closely with CTDOT, MetroCOG, and UCONN to develop a regional GIS schema, to allow towns to collect data to meet the requirements of the MS4 permit.

### Conservation Support Services

WestCOG aims to incorporate energy, land, and water conservation practices into planning by providing data, analytical, and information monitoring services for regional conservation groups and member municipalities. Services for each sector (energy, land, water) will be funneled into the Sustainable CT initiative such that any interested community who joins the State Program can receive regional credits towards their status in the program.

- *Energy:* As part of the POCD development process WestCOG reviewed solar potential and policies to incentivize solar adoption within the region.
- *Land:* WestCOG maintains an open space inventory, supports H2H in its land and natural resource priority mapping, and engages with local land trusts.
- *Water:* WestCOG is active in the development of the state water plan, the Western CT WUCC, MS4 permit, Housatonic Valley Association, watershed alliances, Long Island Sound, and DEEP activities on behalf of the region regarding wetlands, water quality, water based natural resources, and conservation. This included input into HVA's *Still River Watershed* plan.



Figure 6. Sample Stormwater Mapped Network



## Information technology

### Regional mapping, technical assistance, and training

WestCOG provides regional web-based mapping services, support, and analysis. This extends capabilities that are not available at locally in the region and facilitate\*s projects such as wetlands and contour mapping, recreational planning, and congestion and infrastructure analysis.

### Regional GIS data acquisition and distribution

WestCOG has taken the lead in GIS data acquisition and archiving for the region. WestCOG plans, collects, organizes, and distributes zoning, wetlands, land use, planimetric and imagery data sets for the region's members to facilitate analysis, Computer-Aided Mass Appraisal, transportation, and parcel efforts. This simplifies construction, planning, and municipal projects for both individual towns and the region. WestCOG is also research methods to automate the exchange of data between towns and COG so that data can be authoritative and a minimum burden to maintain.

### Regional GIS Portal

WestCOG completed a competitive process to select a vendor to develop a Regional GIS Portal. The project will bring local records up-to-date and will create an online portal that will bring together spatial data covering the region's members, including parcel maps, assessor cards, planimetric maps, and environmental information.

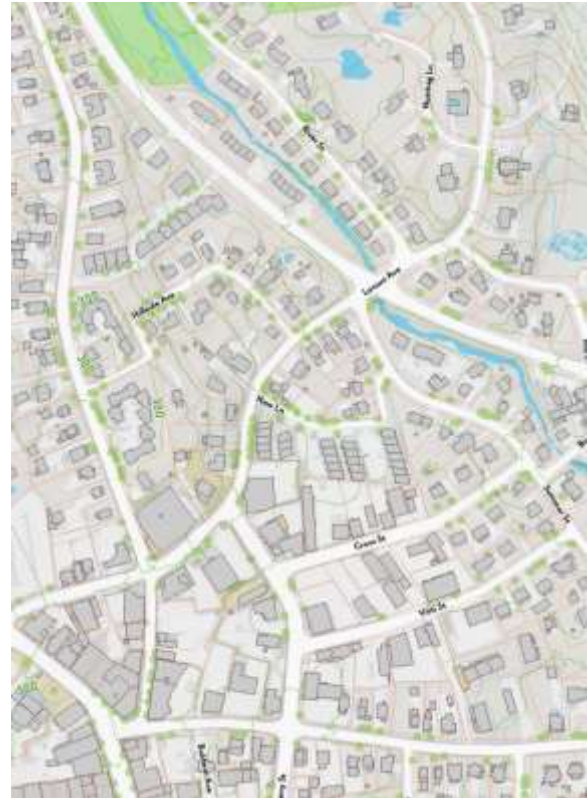


Figure 7. Sample of planimetric and GIS resources at WestCOG.

### GIS and data analytics workflow automation

WestCOG is working on automation of performance metric creation, project mapping, road surface analysis, web mapping, and other task to increase efficiencies and improve the utility of the massive data sets that are now becoming more common. As these skills are not typically available at the municipal level, this effort brings new planning information and approaches to the region.

## Performance of existing regional programs, projects, or initiatives

WestCOG's regional services efforts have been well-received, with no adverse comments during the fiscal year.

The primary challenges faced in the program have been:

- Unreliable funding over the last two state fiscal years. Interruptions to Regional Services Grant funding (due to the lack of a state budget and state rescissions/holdbacks) have yielded project delays and staff departures. Where the delays have caused decision windows to be missed, projects have been canceled. It is hoped that these days are behind the state.
- Resource limitations. The larger and more complex the region, the larger and deeper the opportunities for service sharing are, as are the analytical and logistical challenges in evaluating, preparing for, and launching such services. Current resources suffice for gradual development of shared services; a faster approach would require significantly more.

All projects for the current fiscal year are on track. It is expected that projects will meet their scheduled targets, provided no external shocks are encountered.

## Opportunities for service provision on a regional basis

There is strong interest on behalf of COG members in regional services. WestCOG is pursuing:

- Regional GIS portal, including parcel mapping and property cards
- Regional municipal taxes and fee portal, enabling payment bundling across local departments and municipalities and automatic billing
- Regional payment portal with a shared payment processor (for lower interchange rates)
- Regional economic development
- Regional IT infrastructure

COG members have also expressed an interest in the following, which WestCOG does not have the resources to prosecute at present but may do so in the future:

- Coordination of student transportation, particularly for out-of-district trips
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Coordinator
- Regional Veterans Services Coordinator
- Regional IT coordinator
- Regional purchasing coordinator

## Recommendations for legislative action

The following recommendations would advance service sharing and deliver cost savings.

### Consolidate special districts

Connecticut's 446 special districts greatly outnumber its 169 municipalities. Some have outlived their original purpose, to provide a service that the host municipality did not (e.g., fire protection); others exist because state law does not allow municipalities to set tax rates by neighborhood to reflect differences in service provision (e.g., drinking water and sewer). In some cases, a single public service may be split among several taxing districts in a municipality. To reduce administrative duplication, and improve efficiency, municipalities should be empowered, at their discretion, to absorb noneducational special districts they host, or to compel the districts to merge; to facilitate this, all municipalities should be enabled to set different tax rates to reflect differences in service provision.

### Make the sharing of noneducational services the default

Municipalities and school districts can and have realized savings through the sharing of noneducation services, e.g., finance, HR, IT, facilities maintenance. However, examples remain the exception rather than the rule. This is because service sharing is legally an 'opt-in': services are not shared unless both parties agree. Reversing this, so that intra-municipal sharing of noneducation services is required unless both the municipal legislative body and local school board agree not to, would accelerate service consolidation and deliver savings. Sharing should be the default. (Require an 'opt-out' rather than 'opt-in'.)

### Develop a municipal master agreement for service sharing

Legal, contractual, and logistical questions that attend efforts at service sharing often result in those efforts falling apart. Development and adoption of a master agreement that would a) act as a framework for service sharing, b) lay out a process to establish and govern sharing arrangements, c) cover the range of municipal services, and d) be authoritatively and definitively vetted with respect to Connecticut law would decrease the complexity and uncertainty of service sharing, increasing the number, breadth, and impact of projects that make it to completion.

### Allow changes to municipal charters regarding service sharing, without opening the entire charter for revision

Some charters contain language that impedes service sharing. While this language may be addressed through charter revision, the cost, complexity, and unpredictability of the process often means that the language persists. Municipalities should be able to amend specific sections of their charter without opening the entire charter for review.

### Devolve more programs to the COGs

The Local Transportation Improvement Program (LoTCIP), which delegates the management of transportation projects to the COGs, is a success, delivering projects faster and more efficiently than earlier programs. Other state programs, in transportation and in other areas, would benefit from a regional approach and should be devolved to COGs.

## Expenditure of Regional Services Grant (RSG) funds

WestCOG utilizes its Regional Services Grant (RSG) funds in accordance with its approved RSG Spending Plan, the state fiscal year 2019 version of which is summarized below. As a consequence of the holdbacks implemented after adoption of the Spending Plan, several projects were delayed, pushing activities into the next fiscal year. WestCOG is on track to carry out its RSG Spending Plan for state fiscal year 2020 within the fiscal year, assuming no interruptions to funding.

FY18-19 Regional Services Grant

