

Western Connecticut COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



February 7, 2023

Esteemed Chairs Maroney and D'Agostino,
Members of the General Law Committee:

The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill 5137, *An Act Concerning Online Building Permit Applications*.

WestCOG strongly **supports** this bill, which would reduce costs and delays associated with the development process, as well as provide better customer service to applicants, municipal staff, and the public over the current process which frequently entails an applicant printing out documents, submitting those paper records to municipal departments, which then must scan and re-digitize those records at their own expense, and with the risk of introduced errors.

However, WestCOG asks that you enhance this bill so that:

- Municipalities can **require** that applications be submitted in standard, machine-readable, geospatial digital formats, as determined by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) in conjunction with the Connecticut Geographic Information Officer (GIO)
- Enable municipalities to charge a fee to cover the cost of scanning and digitization of records that are not submitted in one of the standard formats prescribed by DAS/GIO.
- Expand the bill to **include land use applications**, which may include land surveys and subdivision maps in addition to building footprints.

Requiring applications and associated materials to be submitted in (or converted to) standard, machine-readable, geospatial digital formats will allow land use and building records to be integrated efficiently into comprehensive, high-quality datasets that are more than the sum of their parts and that will increase the efficiency of municipal processes that rely on these data, reduce the cost associated with development, and improve planning and policymaking at all levels.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis R. Pickering".

Francis R. Pickering
Executive Director