



State & Commerce Committee - Board of Representatives

Fred Pierre-Louis, Chair

Jonathan Jacobson, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Wednesday, January 26, 2022
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: This meeting was held remotely.

The State & Commerce Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair Pierre-Louis and Committee Member Reps. Goldberg, Miller, and Sandford. Excused or absent were Vice Chair Jacobson and Rep. Pratt. Also in attendance were Reps. de la Cruz and Stella; Frank Petise, Acting Transportation Bureau Chief; State Representatives Dan Fox, David Michel, and Corey Paris; and WestCOG Executive Director Francis Pickering.

Chair Pierre-Louis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
11. SC31.002	REVIEW; Council of Governments Review. 12/08/21 – Submitted by Rep. Miller 12/29/21 – Held by Committee 6-0-0	Report Made

Mr. Pickering gave an overview of the Council of Governments. Some of the points included:

- WestCOG is one of nine regional councils of government established under State law in 2015.
- It fosters collaboration of municipalities. There are 18 members, the largest being Stamford, Danbury, and Norwalk.
- WestCOG gets involved in any areas that a municipality would.
- There is a current ongoing regional broadband study.
- It has an active role in affording housing plans.
- It completed a 5G report that gives extensive guidance to municipalities on how to best accommodate and roll out 5G infrastructure.
- Recently completed a regional tree canopy analysis to mitigate climate change
- WestCOG maintains a long-range transportation plan that looks out 30-40 years, and maintains a transportation improvement program.
- Manages the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP) which provides State funds to municipalities.
- It is currently working on regional transportation studies, such as a regional congestion hotspot study for which a low-cost intervention could help to mitigate the problems.

¹ Video Time Stamp: 00:01:15

- It is working on a guidance document on how best to respond to the new statutory mandates for water quality protection.
- It is responsible for preparing regional natural hazards mitigation plan (which the BOR recently approved) qualifies Stamford and region to access certain FEMA funds, and increase resilience.
- It is finishing a public safety study looking at opportunities for improving service quality and reducing costs through sharing and consolidating services such as 911 call centers, animal control centers, police lockup areas and firing ranges.
- It recently concluded a Waste management study to increase efficiency in solid waste services.
- Partners closely with the Census Bureau. It serves as regional clearinghouse for census and special data.
- Maintains a regional GIS website with several layers of interest.
- Provides upon request spatial data analysis for municipalities.
- Interacts frequently with the State delegation to help explain what are the priorities and needs in the region.
- WestCOG has just adopted the 2022 Policy Priorities and will be presenting them at the February WestCOG meeting.

There was Committee discussion:

- WestCOG has been working with all members of the region to identify what is necessary to be less adversely impacted by natural disasters in the future. It is currently working on plans to identify funding.
- It will be submitting a resiliency plan in the next six months that focuses on coastal areas. This plan is a prerequisite for funding applications.
- There is not a lot of funding available right now for infrastructure needs.
- Federal government is most interested in serving regions rather than individual municipalities.
- WestCOG's goal is to listen to all communities and raise a voice up to those who can fund projects, and to see how State funds can be directed to make up shortfalls in municipalities.
- The WestCOG budget is approximately \$3million.

2. SC31.005	REVIEW; Increasing the Transportation System in the West Side by Adding Buses or Trolleys. 01/05/22 – Submitted by Rep. Stella	Held 3-0-1
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Mr. Petise reviewed the Stamford Transportation System and there was discussion. Some points discussed:

- The Transit System is run by CT Transit so the City has to work with the State on any changes to bus service.
- A number of studies have been done regarding bus service in Stamford. Two big issues to come out of the studies were 1) the route on Stillwater Avenue should go both ways, not just one way and 2) some bus stops should be combined.

² Video Time Stamp: 00:32:40

- There is one trolley that runs out of Harbor Point. It is free and is paid for by BLT.
- There are currently private shuttles that go to specific companies/buildings.
- It would be difficult to have various size buses. Some routes are busier at different times, and smaller buses would have to be switched out for bigger buses at peak times. Additionally, a mixed sized fleet is much more costly.
- Buses have a 12 year life span.
- By 2023 all new bus acquisitions are expected to be electric, with the entire fleet expected to be electric by 2035. This will help to address local emissions.
- Consistency of bus service is very important to people. It is important to know that if you miss your regular bus, another will be along every 30 or 60 minutes.
- Many people have to walk several blocks to get to a bus stop.
- The bus stops should all have adequately covered shelters to protect people from the effects of the weather. People should not have to wait exposed in bad weather for a bus.
- The shelters are owned and maintained by Stamford Transit District. A new contract was signed in December, with a new vendor. There is a list of places where shelters should be added and/or repaired.
- Stamford is a large city and every place should be easily accessed by public transit.
- The West Side has the highest percentage of residents who do not own cars and do not drive to work.
- All districts should be studied, not only the West Side. Previous studies have shown that other areas of the City have public transit issues.
- Rep. Michel stated that he is on the State Transportation Committee and the State Delegation will help in any way they can.

A motion to hold Item #2 was made, seconded, and approved by a vote of 3-0-1 (Reps. Pierre-Louis, Miller, and Sanford in favor; Rep. Goldberg abstained).

Chair Pierre-Louis adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Pierre-Louis, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).