



Connecticut

Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association

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PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

RSB – 42: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY STATE PLANNING

SUMMARY: RSB-42 proposes to establish a task force to study the organization and implementation of State planning.

ANALYSIS: The proposed bill would create a task force consisting of members appointed from a broad representation of interests concerned with the State's ability to conduct, support, coordinate, and implement planning to further the State's planning and conservation goals. The task force would consider the need for improved and better coordinated State planning to address:

Greater Efficiency

- Determination of priority funding areas and review of funding applications for consistency with State, regional, and local plans for Bond Commission consideration.
- Determination of conservation funding priorities and review of open space grant and other conservation grant applications for consistency with State, regional, and local plans.
- Comprehensive review of State Plan updates and interim change requests, considering all areas of State government responsibility and regional as well as local implications. Coordinated review and recommendations for amendments to Transportation Improvement Programs to expedite local and regional action.
- Innovative and aggressive research and management of issues, investment decisions, policies and programs to ensure consistency with each other and with broader policy objectives.

Greater Economy

- Development and maintenance of key databases and analyses to guide State and local budgeting and related planning.
- Coordination of statewide facilities and capital plans.
- Integration of State investments and programs with human resource planning and community and economic development planning.

Enhanced Coordination

- Coordination of transportation planning with opportunities for transit oriented design, including affordable housing, at local and regional levels.
- Coordination of and responses to statewide affordable housing needs through State investment and incentives.
- Creation of a planning focal point for coordination of intra- and interstate planning issues: transportation, environmental protection, and economic development.

Examples of the alternative planning organizational approaches that a task force could consider include:

- a. Restructure and enhance the function of the Intergovernmental Policy Division and the Policy Development and Planning Division of OPM with delineated responsibilities, consistent with PA 05-205.
- b. Revise current agency organization to create a distinct planning office within or separate from OPM. The planning office could be staffed with existing planning staff from OPM and staff from major State agencies or incremental staff. The planning office could be responsible to either OPM or the Governor directly.

Options for political oversight of State planning to be considered include:

- a. Retain the Legislative Continuing Committee on Planning and Development to establish policy goals, provide oversight, and review State Plans and revisions, with refined guidelines for Continuing Committee responsibilities.
- b. Create a State Planning Council charged with regular review of Planning Office functions as well as approval of State Plans and revisions; endorsement of regional and local plans for consistency; and regular reporting to the Governor and Legislature. Such a council could be composed of representatives from each major State agency and legislative appointees.

FISCAL IMPACT: The creation of a task force would have no direct fiscal impact on state agencies or municipalities.

CCAPA POSITION: The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association strongly supports the establishment of this task force as a means of continuing the significant progress the legislature has made over the past few sessions to improve the effectiveness of planning to help the State, its regions, and its municipalities deal with issues of growth, fiscal management, conservation, and other challenges. Such a task force would evaluate the approaches taken by other states with challenges similar to Connecticut's. The analysis and evaluation would result in a set of recommendations that recognize and address Connecticut's specific planning needs, administrative organization, and appropriate political oversight.

Clearly, opportunities exist for efficiency improvements, better coordination, and the application of lean government techniques to the need for better State planning. In addition to the informational hearing on State planning issues that the Committee is considering, establishment of this task force will identify these opportunities and the impact that improved and better coordinated planning would have on development, conservation, economy, and character of the State of Connecticut.

CCAPA believes strongly that this effort is absolutely appropriate and necessary to permit the State to address the tremendous challenges of growth management, fiscal controls, housing and transportation needs, economic development, and conservation of the State's natural and cultural resources.

CCAPA will commit to supporting the work of the task force through the Chapter's network of professional practicing planners to obtain any data, analyses, opinion, or other information that may be requested.