
Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)

Legislative Agenda for 2026

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is the largest council of governments (COG) in Connecticut, serving 38 municipalities with a population of nearly one million residents and covering over 1,000 square miles across much of the Hartford and Tolland counties.

CRCOG appreciates the strong partnership it has enjoyed with state leaders and agencies in recent years. As the State of Connecticut continues to modernize service delivery, strengthen communities, and invest in equitable growth, CRCOG seeks continued collaboration to empower municipalities and regions to achieve shared goals.

CRCOG coordinates its Legislative Agenda in close collaboration with other state and municipal partners, including the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR), the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), and the Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST). This agenda is subject to adjustment as the General Assembly convenes and new priorities or opportunities arise.

Legislative Priorities:

1. Transportation and Infrastructure

CRCOG appreciates the State of Connecticut's ongoing commitment to improving multimodal transportation infrastructure that connects residents, supports job access, and drives regional economic growth. The Capitol Region serves as the nexus of Connecticut's rail, highway, and transit systems, and strategic investments in these systems are essential to maintaining the state's competitiveness and advancing sustainable mobility.

- **Hartford Line and Passenger Rail Investments**

CRCOG welcomes the significant investments being made to enhance the Hartford Line and improve both passenger and freight rail service. CRCOG urges the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) to expedite completion of critical projects, including:

- West Hartford, Newington, and Windsor stations

- Full buildouts of Windsor Locks and Enfield stations
- Corridor-wide double tracking
- Pursuit of a corridor-wide Quiet Zone designation
- **CTfastrak East Expansion**
CRCOG supports expanding CTfastrak service eastward to provide reliable, frequent bus rapid transit to communities underserved by fixed-route options.
- **GHTD Link Micro-Transit Program**
The Greater Hartford Transit District's micro-transit pilot has delivered strong ridership, affordability, and reliability outcomes.

CRCOG's Legislative Requests:

- Extend funding for the GHTD Link Micro-transit Program.
- Expand funding for micro-transit statewide.
- Formalize micro-transit as a recognized state-supported service type within CTDOT's transit funding framework.

2. Expand the Uses of the Small-Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP)

CRCOG supports legislation to broaden allowable uses of STEAP, including:

- Eligibility for regional and inter-municipal projects
- Use of funds for planning, technology, and energy infrastructure
- Simplified administrative requirements for small towns

3. Energy Siting and Land Use Reform

a. Municipal Representation on the Connecticut Siting Council

CRCOG supports adding municipal representation to ensure local context, land-use capacity, and community considerations are reflected in siting decisions.

b. Protection of Farmland and Open Space from Renewable Energy Developments

CRCOG supports prioritizing renewable energy siting on previously developed or disturbed land and discouraging development on prime farmland and forested tracts. A balanced approach should:

- Require compatibility assessments
- Encourage agri-voltaics
- Coordinate with DoAg and DEEP
- Require host-municipality contributions for open space/farmland preservation

c. Local Permitting Authority for Certain Renewable Energy Projects

CRCOG supports establishing a fair share threshold for renewable energy capacity in each town. Once reached, additional projects would require local approval to ensure equitable siting statewide.

4. Modernize the PILOT Program and Local Revenue Options

CRCOG supports measures to expand local revenue sources and reform state aid to reduce overreliance on the property tax. Proposals include:

- Increasing the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Fund to \$139M
- Expanding PILOT reimbursements for tax-exempt property
- Limited municipal taxation authority on nonprofits or large institutions
- Allowing municipalities to retain a portion of sales tax revenue
- Increasing locally retained traffic citation and license fee revenue

5. Enhance Special Education Funding

In alignment with CCM, CRCOG supports increasing special education funding and adopting reforms that deliver sustained, predictable relief for municipalities.

- a. Fully Fund Excess Cost and Modernize the Formula.
- b. CRCOG supports fully funding the Excess Cost grant and adopting a data-driven inflation adjustment to account for rising costs of providing educational services.

CRCOG supports:

- Using an inflation factor tied to the allowable growth under the state spending cap (greater of inflation or 5-year personal income growth)
 - Ensuring districts receive predictable, annually adjusted support that reflects real cost increases
- c. Reform the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR)
 - Modify the MBR so that:
 - Expenditures above the base student cost are excluded
 - Deficit spending is excluded
 - Excess Cost grant funding is excluded from MBR calculations
 - Support a Student-Centered Funding Approach
 - CRCOG supports a student-centered funding model consistent with upcoming CCM proposals, including:
 - A 4-year phase-in fully expanding ECS weighted funding to students attending all public schools of choice
 - A phase-out of general education tuition billing for magnet and Agriscience programs
 - Tens of millions in savings to sending districts

6. Advance a Regional Approach to Housing Growth and Affordability

CRCOG endorses a regional framework for housing growth planning aligned with the draft Act Concerning Housing Growth. Key elements include:

- ~~empowering COGs to coordinate and approve Regional Housing Growth Plans under OPM guidance.~~
- ~~encouraging municipalities to collaborate on shared infrastructure, zoning capacity, and priority housing zones.~~
- ~~supporting a Housing Growth Infrastructure Fund to align housing targets with sewer, water, and transportation planning.~~

Continuing Priorities from 2025

CRCOG reaffirms commitments to ongoing initiatives, including:

- Strengthening investment in multi-use trails
- Advancing road safety and Vision Zero recommendations
- Supporting municipal workforce development and shared services
- Ensuring sustainable policy solutions for energy costs and resiliency