

Planning and Development Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5278

AN ACT CONCERNING INCENTIVES FOR TRANSIT-ORIENTED

Title: DEVELOPMENT.

Vote Date: 3/22/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/28/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

HB 5278 would provide planning grants and other incentives for municipal transit-oriented development projects. By providing planning grant opportunities, HB-5278 will help small towns, many of which do not have the staff or resources to do the necessary planning, move forward with transit-oriented development projects. HB-5278 will build on the significant progress that the state has made in advancing successful Transit-Oriented Development projects.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[American Planning Association, Connecticut chapter, Government Relations Officer, John Guskowski](#): has long supported the promotion of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) as one of the fundamental big-picture planning principles of smart growth. They state that focusing higher-density development in areas of transit infrastructure leverages significant transportation investment, reduces vehicle-miles traveled (and associated environmental impacts), and creates opportunities for lowering per-unit costs on housing developments while fostering walkable, vibrant neighborhoods

[Capitol Region Council of Governments, Executive Director, Matt Hart](#): supports HB 5278 to amend various state statutes to support transit-oriented development (TOD).

CRCOG and several of its member municipalities are increasingly using transit-oriented development as a growth strategy to enhance economic vitality and livability, develop a range of affordable housing opportunities, and promote transit and walkability

Connecticut Business & Industry Association, Public Policy Associate, Peter Myers: is supportive of an incentive-based approach to help create more affordable housing options in this state. They state that by building additional housing around transit stations the residents of these developments are easily able to utilize the public transportation near their home. CBIA urges the committee to support this incentive-based approach to create additional transit-oriented developments.

Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST), Executive Director, Betsy Gara: states that many municipalities are embracing efforts to pursue Transit-Oriented Development to create more vibrant areas near transit stations that include walkable, bikeable areas, mixed-use commercial and residential buildings, job-accessible house, and retail shops. She adds that Connecticut has initiated several successful programs to support Transit Oriented Development, including competitive grant programs that provide funding for municipalities and regional Councils of Government.

Hartford Foundation, Senior Public Policy Officer, Chris Senecal: applauds HB 5278 efforts to support the development of housing by allowing towns to opt-in to create a Transit-Oriented Community (TOC) if they have bus or train service designed by their planning and wetlands commissions. They have seen how restrictive zoning serves as a barrier to residents trying to access public transit. They state that creating more housing opportunities near transit is a crucial step in the ongoing efforts to reform Connecticut's antiquated and discriminatory approach to zoning, which has deprived the state of much-needed housing development and growth that has had a devastating impact on equity and economic vitality.

Resident of CT, Timothy Gabriele: states that around 79% of Connecticut residents commute to work by driving alone in their car, truck, or van, and the average commute time is around 25 minutes. They express that this not only takes a toll on the environment, but the roads and highways the state maintains, as well as the paychecks of commuters springing for ever-increasing gas prices. The share that the reliance on this model of heavy fossil fuel use is compounded by a lack of quality public transportation in many municipalities and a lack of affordable housing.

RiverCOG, Executive Director, Samuel Gold: is currently engaged in the creation of transit-oriented development plans for their region's three Shore Line East Train Stations and the Middletown Bus Passenger Terminal. They hope that the planning funds made available by this bill will allow more communities to create TOD plans for their major transit stations. They share that ideally every train station, bus rapid transit, and major bus terminal should have a TOD plan to implement. They support the other provision of this bill, prioritizing state discretionary funds for TOD locations around the state

Town Of Berlin, Economic Development Director, Chris Edge: believes development around Transit Stations is a great way to develop and re-develop areas which could be or are already on the rise due to state investment in light rail, bus service and more. They state that Berlin and most towns have limited or no capacity in-house to do planning around their transit hubs, nor the financial resources to hire outside experts. They express that this bill will allow

towns such as Berlin and many others to use taxpayer monies in coordination with local resources to look at the best future uses of properties.

[WestCOG, Executive Director, Francis Pickering:](#) states that investments in an area that is not conducive to trans-oriented development (TOD) will not create TOD. They express that by factoring TOD into the determination of where state TOD funds can be spent, the bill will help ensure that locations that are strong candidates for TOD have access to appropriate funding and improve the probability that such investments will succeed in achieving the desired outcomes.

Both of the following submitted testimony sharing their personal experiences as sophomores at Ledyard High School and the need for Transit-Oriented development:

[Resident of CT, Jeannie Drummond](#)
[Resident of CT, Terri Foster](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENTS:

[Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, Advocacy Manager, Zachary McKeown:](#) states that many municipalities have and continue to pursue TOD, providing for more walkable, bikeable areas, mixed-use commercial and residential buildings, job-accessible housing, and retail shops around fixed transit sites. CCM would welcome financial incentives in regard to planning grants and would also urge the committee to consider comprehensive discussion on property tax reform.

[Partnership for Strong Communities, Policy Director, Sean Ghio:](#) asks the committee to consider amending the bill, so that planning grant funds for transit-oriented development are not taken from funding sources currently restricted to distressed municipalities. They state that transit-oriented development districts must include clear efforts to reduce the racial and economic segregation. They express that too few Connecticut transit stations are accessible to low- and moderate-income households. They share that in 14 municipalities with transit stations, less than 5% of the town's housing supply is affordable. They state that low- and moderate-income households have the same right to access public transit system as higher-income households do.

Reported by: Ashley Orser

Date: 4/1/24