

Endorsement Letter from Continuing Committee
Draft - May 15, 2013

On April 8, 2013, the Continuing Legislative Committee on State Planning and Development voted, in accordance with section 16a-30 of the general statutes, to submit the draft State Plan of Conservation and Development Policies Plan Update: 2013-2018 to the General Assembly with its recommendation of approval. This vote was the culmination of a revision process that began with the passage of Public Act 10-138, which required the Office of Policy and Management to develop the update to the State Plan of Conservation and Development through a bottom-up process known as cross-acceptance. Over the past two years, OPM has conducted an unprecedented level of outreach to, and received input from, municipalities, regional planning organizations, affected state agencies, various advocacy groups and the public as it developed this important revision to our state's comprehensive plan.

The Continuing Committee recognizes that many have expressed concern over the way in which the State Plan of Conservation and Development has been implemented in the past, particularly with regard to the manner in which some state agencies have relied upon the Locational Guide Map to determine a proposed project's consistency with the State Plan for the purpose of obtaining state or federal funding. The Continuing Committee makes its present endorsement under the belief that the revisions to the State Plan will not only improve, but prevent such problematic practices going forward.

First, upon adoption of the State Plan, the new priority funding area requirements associated with chapter 297a of the general statutes effectively ensure that no state agency will use the Locational Guide Map, by itself, to determine the consistency of a proposed state action with the State Plan. To the contrary, state-sponsored actions that are not considered growth-related projects under section 16a-35c of the general statutes will be exempt from the Locational Guide Map review. Under the revision to the State Plan, the Locational Guide Map will simply be used to determine whether a growth-related project is located within a priority funding area.

Second, if a growth-related project is not located within a priority funding area, section 16a-35d of the general statutes prescribes an exception process that is weighted toward determining the project's consistency with a municipal plan of conservation and development. This exception process provides a mechanism by which state agencies may consider funding projects that have been deemed to be consistent with the text of the State Plan and are locally supported, even though such projects may not be located within a priority funding area. For this reason, it is critical that municipal plans of conservation and development be as robust as possible and reflect coordinated local infrastructure, community development, and conservation plans.

Finally, as part of its endorsement of the revised State Plan, the Continuing Committee has requested that the Office of Policy and Management work in conjunction with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to facilitate the implementation of the revised State Plan at the local and regional levels. The Continuing Committee believes that a better understanding of the revisions to the State Plan will prevent unnecessary project delays in the future. It is also worth noting that the text of the State Plan includes a separate chapter that describes the role of the Locational Guide Map, its use and application, and the criteria for delineating the boundaries of priority funding areas.