

February 12, 2018

Jeanette White, Chair
Senate Government Operations Committee
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: S. 273

Dear Chair White:

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide some reaction to sections 10, 11 and 18 of this bill, as introduced.

On Section 18, TRORC and the other RPCs strongly support your recognition that conversations and planning related to shared services on public safety is needed. The conversations as I mentioned when I testified, are difficult and time consuming and are generally beyond the scope of what RPCs can conduct within our existing funding streams. Additional support, in the form you have outlined in Section 18, would enable meaningful conversations to occur. Please let us know if you need any additional details to ensure this provision stays in S. 273.

While I was unable to provide strong support for sections 10 and 11 at this time, I am entirely sympathetic to the need for municipalities and RPCs to have local and regional discussions about services and how they may be inadequate or costly or inequitably provided. I mentioned the need for towns to aggressively conduct capital budgeting and 5-year capital improvements planning.

There is a source of funds to underwrite these local capital planning efforts, the Municipal Planning Grant Program enabled under 24 VSA, Section 4306. What I failed to mention, however, is the increasing difficulty for the smallest communities to effectively compete for these grants. Although the statute and Legislative intent years ago was that "...any eligible municipality or municipalities to compete regardless of size...", The Department that administers these funds has, without Legislative direction, **instituted match requirements and other impediments that have dampened availability for the smallest towns, those that are least strong fiscally and administratively. This, we believe, is contrary to the direction the Legislature intended.**

These concerns are shared by all regional planning commissions and have been shared with the Department on numerous occasions with no resolution.

Correcting this situation may yield more interest in the capital planning we all understand, is essential.

Sincerely,


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Executive Director

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