

February 16, 2022

Representative Mary Hooper, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
115 State Street
Montpelier Vermont 05633

Regional Planning Commission – FY 23

Dear Chair Hooper and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for your continued support for the work regional planning commissions do to advance all your priorities in the quantity and quality of housing, clean water, transportation, energy, rural economic development, climate action and pandemic recovery. These issues are distinct but linked and RPCs remain ideally suited to implement actions in our communities.

Given the magnitude of effort we are being asked to do on behalf of the state, **we respectfully request that the HAC allow the RPC funding formula in statute to run as intended when originally enacted.**

Our specific needs are as follows:

Energy:

\$2.4 million to provide funding by providing technical assistance to municipalities in implementing their energy actions consistent with the Comprehensive Energy Plan and Climate Action Plan. (2-year request)

This ensures small and rural municipalities have resources needed to implement these plans, reduce fossil fuel use and support the local economy. This funding is included in several actions in the Climate Action Plan that recommend RPCs be provided with resources to assist municipalities with mitigation projects. Just as state agencies are provided resources to implement this plan, capacity is needed at the local and regional level.

This continues funding provided in Section G.600(b)(1)(C) of Act 74 (H.439) of 2020, to deliver technical assistance services for municipal implementation to advance the Regional Energy Plan, Statewide Energy Plan and emerging climate goals. With the funding provided last year, RPCs have increased capacity, including hiring staff dedicated to this work.

\$2.4 million to solicit, coordinate and develop specific projects for public building energy conversion and weatherization as articulated in H. 518. (2-year request)

Climate:

\$1.2 million for a natural resource staff person at each RPC to work on implementing the Climate Action Plan in areas of resiliency and adaptation.

Gerald Fredrickson, Chair ~ Peter G. Gregory, AICP, Executive Director
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Brownfields:

\$2 million in brownfields assessment funding. In three months, RPCs have encumbered over 60% of the FY 22 funding, and it is estimated that all the funding will be encumbered before the end of the fiscal year. These funds are vital for the redevelopment of contaminated properties in our downtowns and villages, and for multi-family housing units that are contaminated with lead, PCBs and asbestos.

Housing:

\$500k for housing support. The RPCs are seeking funding to assist towns and non-profit and for-profit housing developers with pre-development activities such as facilitation and community outreach, coordination with state and local officials on permitting, brownfields, and transportation issues. These activities are critical for moving projects forward in an efficient manner, without delay. Many projects have failed or been delayed due to poor public outreach and coordination with state and local permitting officials.

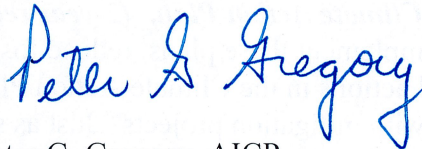
ARPA and Infrastructure support to municipalities:

\$250k to enable RPCs' continued support for our communities in the strategic use of ARPA funds through the ARPA eligible period. Additional support for our municipalities on infrastructure planning and development, such as water, wastewater, and broadband development is needed due to recently passed federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. These two infusions of federal funding have created significant opportunities to advance this work, but the assistance of RPCs is critical for this to happen.

After your discussion today in Committee about RPCs and the property transfer tax, we will be following up with you.

Thank you for your consideration of our needs. Please feel free to reach out to us with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter G. Gregory". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Peter G. Gregory, AICP
Executive Director

cc: HAC members
RPC Directors