Infrastructure & Transportation

CCM Public Policy Issue Bulletin

Overview

There are over 17,365 miles of road that are maintained by Connecticut municipalities. In addition, towns and cities are responsible for over 4,225 bridges and 3,400 culverts. Along with surface road responsibilities, municipal leaders have a continued focus on other transportation initiatives, including mass transit, walkable communities and Transit Oriented Development (TOD), which focus on integrated planning to bring people, activities, buildings, and public space together around a central transit system.

Infrastructure is not only about transportation, it is about resiliency, connectivity and sustainability.

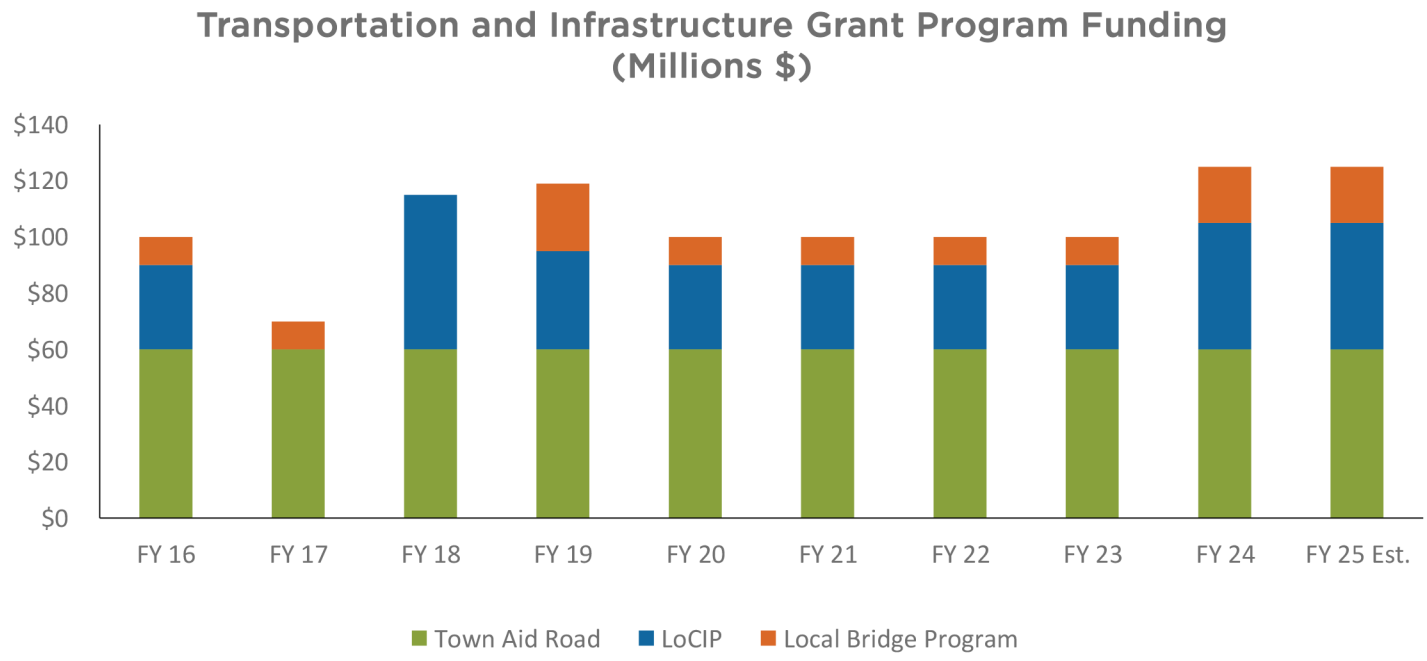
Resiliency and Flood Mitigation

Municipalities are largely responsible for resiliency planning and preparedness, and maintaining the infrastructure needed to manage drinking water, wastewater, stormwater runoff and more in an emergency. As Connecticut's communities experience increasingly frequent extreme weather events, and municipalities face new challenges like sea level rise and record-breaking flooding, there is a greater need than ever to repair and replace local infrastructure that is often decades old and unable to meet the demands of increased development and population growth. Towns and cities are also mandated by state and federal regulation on management of stormwater runoff to reduce pollutants and sediment from impacting local water bodies, but the responsibility to pay for it falls almost exclusively to local property taxpayers.

CCM has been a partner and conduit between state and local officials on the issue of resiliency and disaster preparedness. Recently, we released "Strategic Flooding Mitigation for Connecticut: Challenges and Solutions," a comprehensive report aimed at addressing the growing concerns surrounding flood risks across Connecticut that includes actionable recommendations to enhance the resilience of our communities. CCM will continue to advocate for increased funding for stormwater infrastructure and better collaboration and partnerships with relevant state and federal agencies to keep our communities safe.

Transportation Funding

The American Society of Civil Engineers gave Connecticut a C- grade on its infrastructure report card. The federal funding helped to bolster investments necessary to improve infrastructure and transportation in the state. Traditionally, while a portion of local property taxes pro-



Source: CCM analysis of adopted state budgets

vide some funding for infrastructure and transportation projects, it does not meet the overall need. The state has provided supplemental funding to support local roads and bridges through the following programs:

Town Aid Road (TAR) -- a specific grant formula to help municipalities fund the construction, improvement and maintenance of local roads and bridges. This money may also be used for a variety of programs related to roads, traffic, and parking.

Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP) - reimburses municipalities for the costs associated with eligible capital improvement projects such as road, bridge or public building construction activities.

Local Bridge Program – provides financial assistance to municipalities for the removal, replacement, reconstruction or rehabilitation of these local bridges.

Among these opportunities, a strong state-local partnership is needed to ensure that Connecticut is afforded the highest degree of success in being awarded competitive grants. Leveraging federal and state resources is the key to fulfilling our obligations to ensure that roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure are well maintained and safe for all users.

Technical Assistance and Management Capacity Building

Many municipalities do not have adequate staffing or capacity to apply and compete for state and federal grants. Providing state funding to cover a portion of the required local match for federal grants and promoting regional collaboration when applying for state and federal grants will assist in alleviating this problem. This can be accomplished by streamlining and simplifying the application process for state grants, providing ongoing outreach training and tools to municipalities and by strengthening the role of the Council of Governments (COGs) to manage and administer regional programs on behalf of their respective participating municipalities.

Transit Oriented Development

The need for an affordable, diverse housing stock is at the heart of economic development creation. Towns and cities throughout Connecticut have significant potential for accommodating transit oriented, mixed-use development which includes housing. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in particular focuses on integrated planning to bring people, activities, buildings, and public space together around a central transit system is part of that effort. The creation of mixed-use development, especially in existing buildings, is an economic multiplier that creates jobs, renovates under-utilized and often blighted properties that, when completed, can spur neighborhood revitalization, increase local grand lists and property values. Incorporating transit and mixed-use development helps towns and cities retain their unique charm and provide the type of housing that is in high demand among younger people as they enter the workforce.

Conclusion

Fiscal problems should not be an excuse for overlooking rapidly aging infrastructure, and the longer maintenance or replacement is deferred, the risk to public safety increases and the costs to bring these bridges up to an acceptable standard increase. A comprehensive and collaborative investment plan is necessary to ensure Connecticut is able to provide economical and lifestyle advances for the state.

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