



October 14, 2009

The Honorable Christopher Dodd
Chairman
Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Dodd and Ranking Member Shelby,

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), representing regional planning organizations and their local elected officials nationwide – large, small, urban and rural – including metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and councils of governments (COGs), supports efforts to reinvigorate comprehensive regional planning and implementation through enactment of the “Livable Communities Act of 2009” (S.1619). We are encouraged by this approach, and urge the advancement of any federal opportunity that provides incentives for regions to plan comprehensive future growth in a coordinated way that reduces congestion, generates good-paying jobs, meets our environmental and energy goals, protects rural areas and green space, revitalizes our Main Streets and urban centers, creates and preserves affordable housing, and makes our communities better places to live, work and raise families.

Many regions, as highlighted in NARC’s enclosed “Federal Livability Framework: A Central Role for Regions,” a document developed at the urging of your Committee, have been working at this level of coordination for years, and now is the time to engage our federal partners with a reinvigorated commitment to regional comprehensive planning through a livability program that crosses multiple federal agencies and patches together planning requirements to provide a more holistic approach to solving current challenges. NARC applauds S.1619’s efforts to:

- reaffirm the federal role in regionalism;
- coordinate regional assistance programs;
- conduct federal interagency meetings;
- determine federal livability goals;
- include regions and local governments of all sizes and make ups;
- establish competitive comprehensive regional planning and implementation grants;
- promote regional and local cooperation and service sharing;
- improve data collection, research, evaluation and analysis;
- ensure land use/zoning requirements do not impede upon local decision-making; and,
- provide for transparency, accountability and replicability.

Thank you for your commitment to building a better America. NARC looks forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress, the Administration, the appropriate federal agencies and association partners to determine how regions can be the leader in promoting the goals of the federal livability agenda, while helping restore economic prosperity in our nation’s communities and foster partnerships and innovative practices that make each region a great place to live, play, work and invest.

Please consider NARC a strong ally and supporter of moving this legislation forward. Do not hesitate to contact me directly with questions at 860.478.5535 or steveC1109@aol.com or Fred Abousleman, NARC’s Executive Director at 202.986.1032, x216, fred@NARC.org.

Sincerely,

Stephen T. Cassano
President, NARC
Selectman, Town of Manchester, CT

Cc: Members, U.S. Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee