



A BETTER WAY TO AN
**ACCOUNTABLE
CONNECTICUT**

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Senate Republican Leader

& The Connecticut Senate Republican Caucus



All Connecticut residents deserve a government that is transparent and accountable.

The sacrifices of taxpayers must be respected.

Connecticut has an obligation to ensure every taxpayer dollar entrusted to our state is spent wisely and with full transparency. As Connecticut receives an historic amount of federal funding intended to provide relief and investment in our state, we must work to establish proper safeguards, openness, and accountability.

Members of the public and the legislature have repeatedly raised questions about when, where, and how federal COVID-19 relief dollars have been spent, and if the executive branch decisions are best represented to fulfill the needs of the public. Connecticut must do better to inform the public about how federal funds are being used so government can be held accountable by the people it serves.

We are proposing A Better Way by enhancing accountability measures in the following areas:

- 1. COVID-19 relief funding transparency and oversight**
- 2. Federal infrastructure funding accountability**
- 3. Ensure accountability through the checks and balances of our democracy by establishing the Chief Accountability Office.**

We must safeguard funds, especially when receiving historic investments from the federal government. We must implement oversight. And above all, we must enhance transparency and public access.



COVID-19 RELIEF FUND TRANSPARENCY & OVERSIGHT

“Democrats and Republicans need to be on the same team to shield two things that don’t have political affiliations – the state’s money and its reputation.”

— *Hearst Connecticut Media Editorial Board, October, 2021*

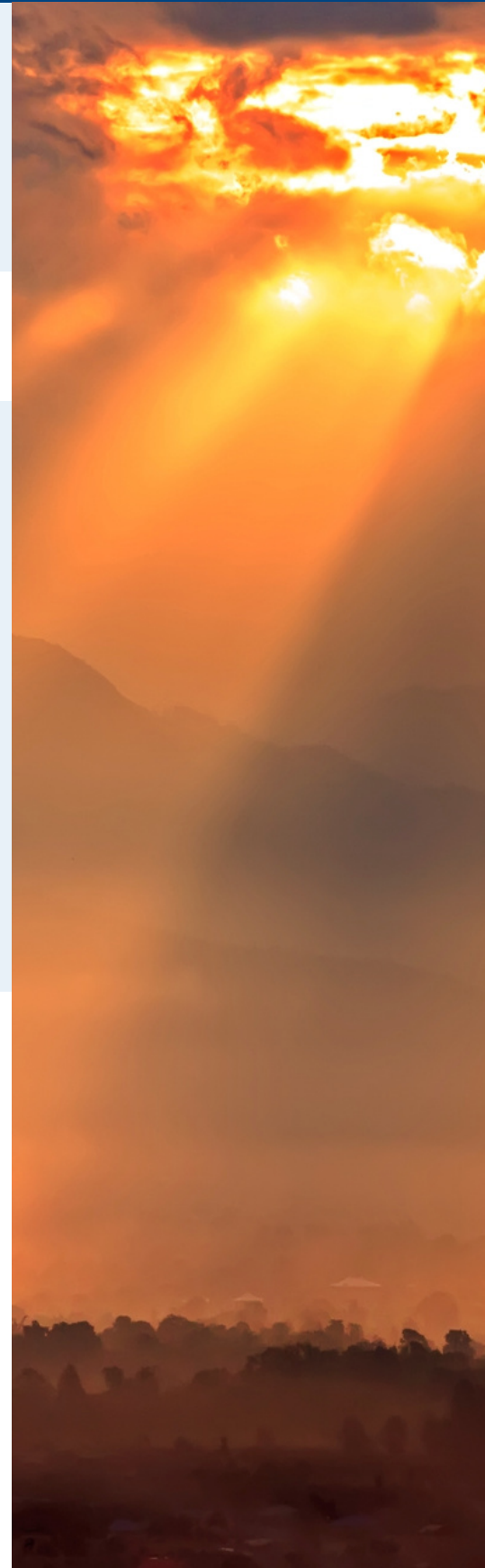
When managing such historic levels of federal investments, Connecticut must do so with transparency and accountability to taxpayers.

Spotlight: West Haven

- On October 20, 2021, a former State Representative was charged with abusing his paid position as an assistant in City Hall to steal over \$600,000 in COVID relief funds from the City of West Haven.
- This case was particularly vexing because not only did he steal from his own employer and harm the people he had sworn to protect as a member of the legislature, but he was able to execute this fraud while the City of West Haven was already under one of the highest levels of state financial oversight.
- Clearly a greater amount of transparency, oversight and disclosure is needed to prevent something like this from occurring in the future.

We propose the following legislative actions to ensure greater transparency, oversight and accountability of federal relief and stimulus funding:

- To provide transparency, oversight and accountability for the state's allocation of certain federal funds, require the chief executive officer of each municipality receiving them to submit quarterly reports to the Secretary of OPM with a full accounting of their expenditures – if any – of such funds.
- Require these quarterly reports to be easily accessible on the websites of both OPM and the responding municipality.
- Establish an aggregate threshold at which payments of these funds to any one vendor in excess of that threshold must be reviewed and approved by OPM.





INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING ACCOUNTABILITY

Connecticut is receiving nearly \$5.4 billion in federal infrastructure funds.

Nearly \$1.07 billion has already been received by CTDOT during fiscal year 2022 alone.

We have a unique opportunity to turn historic federal investment into something truly transformational for jobs, labor, and the economy.

We must use these funds to address CT's most pressing infrastructure needs, to appropriately address climate initiatives, and advance transportation for the future.

The legislative branch, while coequal, has a solemn duty to hold the executive branch accountable for its stewardship of public funds and projects. For example: the Clean Air Act fee that we pay as part of our driver's licenses – which is supposed to support clean air and green initiatives - is split between the General Fund and Special Transportation Fund with no restriction on how it is spent. Last year, that fee raised over \$17 million.

We must ensure that these funds are invested wisely to achieve our goals for improved infrastructure, cleaner air, and more accessible travel for everyone.



We must make sure we are moving projects forward quickly and efficiently.

To ensure an open process that respects the taxpayers' dollars, we propose ***requiring*** the CTDOT to establish a page on its web site dedicated to its use of funds received pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

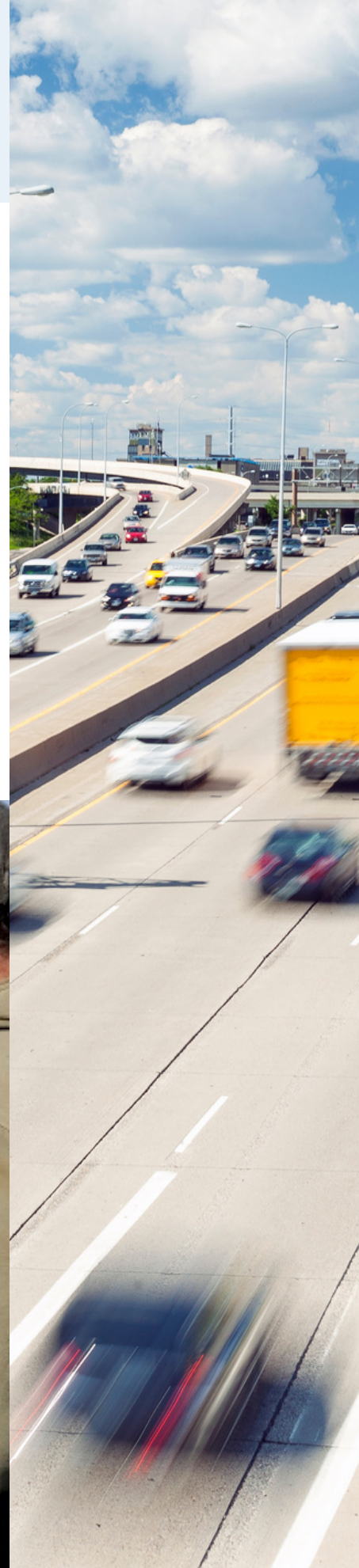
Right now, that is not part of our law.

Executive branch agencies administering these funds or projects should be required to tell the public:

- What we are receiving.
- What we have spent and on what and how much.
- The anticipated or known completion date for each project.
- The current status of the project, completion date and if it's under budget or over budget.
- If it is anticipated that the project will be over budget, the reason the project is over budget; and the actions taken to address

We need to codify that requirement.

We need to know where that money is going, we need to enable taxpayers to see where it is going, and we need to formalize those transparency goals.



ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY

Connecticut does not have the best track record when it comes to directing funds to their intended purpose especially when it come to investments in transportation. Even in areas Connecticut Democratic leaders often identify as priorities, funds are not always spent where they are promised. For example, Connecticut already has multiple environment related fees associated with car registration. But much of the revenue that these fees generate is not directed to clean energy programs. In 2020 the state brought in \$17.3 million from the Clean Air Act Fee, \$4.2 million from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction fee, and \$8.5 million from the Emissions Exemption Fee -- all of which were not directed to any specific clean energy account or initiative to make our environment cleaner.

To ensure an open process that respects the taxpayers' sacrifice, we propose establishing required [quarterly reporting](#) to the following General Assembly committees:

- [Transportation Committee](#)
- [Environment Committee](#)
- [Appropriations Committee](#)
- [Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee](#)
- [Government Administration and Elections Committee](#)

Each report will be followed by a [quarterly public hearing before the legislative committees](#). Under this proposal, the executive branch and Department of Transportation will be required to provide a full accounting to the committees of all spending and future plans for spending related to the federal infrastructure funds. The executive branch will also be required to report to the legislature on progress of specific projects and construction dates to ensure anticipated projects remain on track. The Department of Transportation must specifically make clear how the funds are being used to augment, and not replace, the state's already planned for investments in transportation.

In addition, we propose requiring the Department of Transportation make [available to the public in the form of a website](#) the information shared with the legislature including but not limited to: how much funding has been received; what has been spent; the cost of each project; the progress on spending for each project; the completion date for each project; the status of each project as either being on schedule or behind; why the project is behind schedule or why the cost overage; and if behind schedule details on what actions are being taken to address any delays.

We have a unique opportunity to turn a historic federal investment into something truly transformational for jobs, labor, and the economy. We must use these funds to address CT's most pressing infrastructure needs, to appropriately fund effective carbon emissions reduction and climate initiatives, and to advance transportation for the future.

We need an open process to move toward these goals with efficiency, accountability, and safeguards.



INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING ACCOUNTABILITY

Following the passage of the Congressional infrastructure bill, it has been estimated that Connecticut will receive nearly \$5.38 billion federal investment in our state over the next five years. This significant investment requires government accountability and transparency to ensure the federal funds will be best utilized to achieve better, safer, and greener transportation.

The legislative branch must have a role in holding the executive branch accountable in staying on task with meeting the state's most urgent transportation needs and greenhouse gas reduction plans eligible for federal investment. We must ensure that these funds are invested wisely to achieve our goals for improved infrastructure, cleaner air, and more accessible travel for everyone.

ESTIMATED INVESTMENT IN CONNECTICUT

\$3.3 billion to tackle major corridor congestion and safety, accelerate construction projects, and create smarter and safer roads/streets for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists

\$1.3 billion to enhance public transit (bus and rail)

\$560 million to bring Connecticut's aging bridges into a state of good repair

\$90 million to make Connecticut's transportation assets more resilient to weather and natural disasters

\$80 million to reduce transportation carbon emissions

\$50 million to build out Connecticut's publicly accessible electric vehicle charging stations





WHO WILL HOLD OTHERS ACCOUNTABLE?

**The
sacrifices of
taxpayers
must be
respected.**

We propose establishing the State Accountability Office, led by two Chief Accountability Officers – one from each party, akin to the State Auditors – to ensure that state, quasi-public, and local governmental activities are held to the highest standards of integrity and best execution on behalf of the taxpayers. The Chief Accountability Officers:

- Shall be appointed by, and accountable to, the majority and minority parties of the legislature. The primary criteria for the position will be a candidate's personal integrity and demonstrated proficiency in accounting, audit, financial analysis, law, business analytics, public administration, or criminal justice and investigations.
- Shall serve a term of five years and shall act to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse in the expenditure of public funds – including funding for education – within the state or relating to the procurement of supplies, services or construction by a state agency, quasi-public agency, or municipality.
- May recommend policies to assist in the prevention and detection of fraud, waste and abuse, and shall assist any state agency or municipality in implementing such recommended policy.
- Shall report to the Attorney General, Chief State's Attorney, or both, whenever they have a reasonable belief that there has been a violation of state or federal law.
- Shall submit an annual report summarizing their investigative activities and summarizing any problems prevented or detected, a description of any corrective measures they may have taken or recommended, and any matters that have been referred to prosecutive authorities.
- The costs associated with this office will be offset by the measurable savings it generates, as has been done successfully in Massachusetts



THE QUEST FOR ACCOUNTABILITY CONTINUES...

A Tale of Two Audits



The recent taxpayer-funded DAS audit of the controversial school construction program cost taxpayers \$240,000.00.

From the beginning of the process the legislature was misled as to the timing and scope of the audit. Legislators were told that it would be swiftly completed in a few months, when in reality it took over a year. Legislators were told that the scope of the audit would include the Department's interactions with the victim municipalities, when in reality DAS unilaterally limited the scope of the audit to exclude those interactions.

Why did DAS purposefully narrow the scope of the audit to look only within their own Department – ignoring the very point where the problems arose - then take more than twice as long to release the report?

That is juxtaposed with OPM's January 30, 2023 audit of the "Municipal Use of Covid Relief Funds" which included a review of all 169 municipalities' uses of Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF), as well as a comprehensive analysis of the ten most-flagged municipalities following their initial review. That audit concluded that among those ten most-flagged and five randomly selected municipalities, nearly 20% of CRF funds were misappropriated. Neither OPM nor their auditor said they had any problem working with the municipalities to obtain the needed information.

There is a better way. The historic investments that are being made with federal transportation and Covid-relief funds must usher-in a greener, healthier, more prosperous state. But these investments must also respect the taxpayers' sacrifices. It's up to us, your government, to ensure that these funds are transparently deployed, efficiently spent, and secured from the grasp of a few bad actors

CT Senate Republicans offer "A Better Way to an Accountable Connecticut" in the hope that our solutions gain bipartisan support and help improve the quality of life for everyone in our state.

