

**Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs**  
**Field Hearing on Transportation**  
**A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transportation System:**  
**Reducing Gridlock, Tackling Climate Change, Growing Connecticut's Economy**  
Thursday April 16, 2009  
Hall of Records – 200 Orange Street, New Haven, Connecticut

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**Introduction:**

Good morning Senator. My name is Ron Kilcoyne and I am the General Manager/Chief Executive Officer for Greater Bridgeport Transit. In addition to my role at the GBT, I have spent 29 years working in the provision of public transportation - promoting its importance in healthy communities. In addition to my work at the GBT, I serve at the Chairman of the Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the Land Use and Transportation subcommittee of the City of Bridgeport's sustainability effort (BGreen 2020), Chairman of APTA's Urban Design Standards subcommittee as well as APTA's Systems Management, Operations and Planning subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony at this morning's hearing. Forums such as these ensure that the comments of public transit providers and others interested in the role public transportation plays (and will play) in healthy communities, the Nation's energy, environmental and economic policies are considered.

I would also like to thank you for your efforts on our behalf. Your commitment to public transportation can be seen throughout our system. Today, thousands of riders are traveling to work and school using services made possible under the JARC program, new interregional bus service has been established along the congested I-95 corridor in south western Connecticut

(providing over 100,000 trips per month), riders in the Bridgeport region are benefiting from the new bus station in Downtown Bridgeport and GBT is beginning design work on a project to improve and expand our maintenance facility to allow for growth over the next 15 years - all made possible through your commitment and with funding under SAFETEA-LU.

My testimony will focus first on the overarching benefits of public transportation in many areas of critical importance to our future at the national, state and local levels. More importantly, I would like to comment on the capital and operating needs of public transportation and how these may be considered and address in upcoming legislation. I will conclude with specific recommendations for future funding using a Connecticut example.

### **Overarching Benefits of Public Transportation:**

The need for increased investment in public transportation has never been greater. Public transportation will necessarily play an increasing role in addressing some of the nations most pressing issues including reducing dependence on foreign oil, improving our environment and decreasing demand for non-renewable resources, helping to put people back to work, providing access to essential community resources for people from all walks of life and providing an immediate alternative for those not wanting to join congested highways.

Investment in public transportation in Bridgeport has lead to new services to major employment centers, extended service spans helping second and third shift workers and our services are heavily utilized - we have experienced an 11% growth in ridership in the last six months of 2008 and the growth continues.

More and more, people are turning to public transportation as their mobility choice and we need to expand the services to meet the new demand and take advantage of all of the benefits public transportation brings to healthy communities – there has never been a better time than now.

As I stated in my introduction, I have been involved at the policy level with the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) for many years. APTA has conducted their own research regarding the impacts of public transportation and assembled the findings of others. While I will not dwell on these facts as they are readily available in much greater detail, I would like to briefly cover some of the benefits of public transportation regarding:

1. Dependence on Foreign Oil - Riders using public transportation save the nation the equivalent of 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline annually. Public transportation riders also save the equivalent of 900,000 automobile “fill-ups” every day. These benefits grow as the cost of fuel rises.

2. Public Transportation and Moving the Economy – For every \$1 billion invested in federally aided public transportation projects approximately 30,000 jobs are created. The funding from the ARRA will create over 250,000 jobs for Americans. Secretary LaHood had it right when he said “*We are the federal agency most responsible for keeping people working*”. Every \$10 million invested in capital returns up to \$30 million in business sales alone and every \$1 invested in public transportation returns \$6.
3. Public Transportation and Our Environment – Public transportation services offer an immediate alternative to people wanting to reduce their “environmental footprint”. A rider switching from a 20-mile roundtrip commute will cut his/her CO2 emission by 4,800 pounds per year and public transportation “saves” 37 million metric tons of CO2 annually. These are some of the benefits of using public transportation and they will grow in the future as transit providers transition to more fuel efficient or new technology vehicles. In addition, many agencies are incorporating environmentally friendly elements into the design of their facilities and stations. At Bridgeport, our new facility expansion project will be designed for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.
4. The Importance of Transit Oriented Development and Healthy Communities – Americans living in areas served by public transportation save 541 million hours of travel time and 340 million gallons of fuel annually. Public transportation is a critical component of the City of Bridgeport’s Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and sustainability efforts that are now in full swing. The City of Bridgeport is determined to reduce its carbon footprint and improve urban air quality. It is reducing minimum parking requirements and is actively seeking dense infill without increasing roadway capacity all of which will require a significant increase in transit use. Public transportation provides an immediate alternative to contributing to congestion, and dependable accessibility for people of all walks of life (seniors, riders with disabilities, students, employees). Households cost are reduced significantly for those choosing public transportation.
5. Local Benefits – The local benefits of bus transportation that we provide in the Bridgeport region have been great – ridership is growing, JARC and DSS funding has been used to implement new services. Some limited new State investment in bus transit has allowed for service improvement. We have a queue of projects ready for implementation and this will continue this if the capital and operating investment is there. Other transit providers around the state have service improvements ready to go. There is clearly a need for greater and more reliable investment in public transportation.

### **Public Transportation Needs:**

The benefits of public transportation are clear. In Bridgeport, throughout Connecticut and across the country, people, for the reasons I just mentioned, are finding public transportation (all modes) an attractive alternative to driving alone. How then do we sustain this momentum and reap the environmental, economic development and energy rewards the increased use of public transportation can bring? - By recognizing the importance and increasing capital and operating investment – increasing federal funding and offering creative incentives to encourage increased state and local investment in transit operations and improved coordination with land uses. We need to fund the efficient expansion of our public transportation services and improve access to them – this is true locally in Bridgeport and throughout the nation.

**Capital and Operating Needs** – Before the infusion of capital funding under the ARRA, it was difficult to secure the local match for projects (other than rolling stock and facilities) to be funded under FTA formula or discretionary programs. This difficulty is likely to continue after the initial ARRA funding is exhausted. The Connecticut Department of Transportation has been enormously cooperative in helping the Bridgeport region with their 2009 and 2010 capital plans and today we are working with the Department on several large capital projects including the replacement of 15 buses and the possible purchase of buses to expand our fleet. However, additional federal funding and additional local match are required to meet the current and future capital needs. Transit agencies also struggle with the inability to plan service improvements and expansions on a predictable and reliable schedule. There have been occasions where additional operating investments are proposed without the required capital investment and there have been occasions where capital funding is made available with no associated operating funding.

**Encouraging New Operating Investment** – The next surface transportation authorization legislation should include, as a major component, incentives, conditions or new programs that encourage states and local governments to invest more in public transportation operations. There are several alternatives to explore in this area including:

1. **Incentives** – The creation of an incentive program for states to invest in new and expanded transit operations. This could include bonus grants to states and/or regional entities that have the highest levels of transit service and highest increases in transit service as well as incentive payments to states that allow gas tax and other road user fees eligible for transit use. H.R. 1827 is a good start. However, there are ways it could be improved. First, it should reward outputs (e.g. service hours per capita or ridership per capita) instead of inputs (dollars spent) to assure that the investment is resulting in desired outcomes and to use a measure that has the same value in all locales. Second, the amount of these incentives needs to be increased to have impact. However, the bill does allow for the incentives to be used for either transit or road use. While we don't want to encourage new roads, this is good since recipients are more likely to be motivated by this program.

2. **Conditions** – Conditions may be placed on any new funding available through authorization which would require new investment in transit operations. In order to access funding from a number of “pools”, local and state governments would be required to commit higher levels of service in new or existing public transportation modes. As with incentives conditions should be based on outputs rather than inputs.
3. **Modifications to Programs/Regulatory Requirements** – ARRA requires no state or local match and these projects are moving quickly. Consideration should be given to modifying local match requirements for the capital programs so that state and local governments would be able to match capital funding with new investment in operations. This alternative helps to address the capital vs. operating “catch 22” I mentioned above. States and local governments would be encouraged to identify new and creative sources of operating investment and would be assured that the requisite capital elements of the service would be in place.
4. A combination of all of these alternatives may have the biggest impact.

**Access to Public Transportation** – How accessible is our public transportation system? The extent to which our services in Bridgeport and across the State are “accessible” or available goes beyond our ability to implement new routes or add or extend service hours. It must be considered as part of planning, development and urban design efforts. There is a need at all levels to incorporate public transportation access to stations, stops and new developments as they are being planned. Consideration should be given to creating incentives or conditions on funding which encourage or require close land use/public transportation planning. The incentives and conditions referred to above for increased state and local investment in transit can be used as models of developing the incentives and conditions for assuring states and local governments address the access to transit issue as well.

### **Specific Recommendations:**

**Capital Funding** – At the State level, there is a need to commit to longer term capital planning/funding for facilities and rolling-stock. Consideration should be given to longer term “authorizations” with annual appropriations and minimum guarantees. This would allow for steady and efficient growth of the State’s transportation infrastructure.

**Local (State) Needs** – To illustrate the need for increased levels of transit service, Transit for Connecticut, a coalition of businesses, the Connecticut Fund for the Environment, AARP and over 30 other agencies, has conducted a study which evaluated the need for additional capital and

operating investment in public transportation. The study concluded that the State would require a steady increase in operating investment to reach an additional \$63 million to provide optimum (bus) transit levels (1.8 million hours of service) and an additional \$215 million in the associated capital investment. I have included this report and its executive summary as an attachment to my testimony.

**National Needs** – In the upcoming authorization - no less than \$123 billion over the course of six years coupled with strong guarantees is recommended. There is also a need to ensure steady and predictable funding from the Highway Trust Fund or new revenue streams as revenues from federal motor fuels taxes declines. Ironically, partially as a result of the successes in public transportation and other efforts to reduce VMT (Americans drove 90 billion fewer miles in the last 11 months of 2008), Congress will need to change the Nation's approach toward funding the transportation infrastructure.

**Flexibility** – While under the authorization all transportation programs should grow at the same, we would like to see some level of flexibility in the 5310 (Capital), 5316 (JARC) and 5317 (NFI) programs, allowing locally coordinated human service transportation planning groups determine the most appropriate approach to investment of these funds in their respective regions. Combining these three programs into one will result in more effective use of the funds.

I hope that my comments are of value during the dialogue that will take place as authorization and other legislation is being considered. I will be available at any time if you or your staff has any questions or require any additional or support materials. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and for all of you efforts on our behalf.