

Transit for Connecticut

Helping People, the Economy and the Environment

Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee

April 16, 2009

“A 21st Century Transportation System: Reducing Gridlock, Tackling Climate Change,
and Growing Connecticut’s Economy

My name is Karen Burnaska and I am Coordinator for the Transit for Connecticut Coalition administered by Connecticut Fund for the Environment. The Transit for Connecticut Coalition is a statewide coalition of business, social service, environmental, planning, transportation and civic organizations dedicated to increasing awareness of the benefits of bus transit and advocating for increased funding for bus transit. On behalf of the Coalition, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Connecticut’s transportation system is like a three-legged stool: the three legs being roads, rail and bus. All three are needed for a balanced system and all three are interconnected.

With the support of the One Region Funders’ Group and its Connecticut partners, the Fairfield County Community Foundation and the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, Transit for Connecticut completed a bus needs analysis study in March of 2007. The study detailed the benefits of bus transit and proposed an investment plan that would increase bus ridership by over 80%.

The study stated various ways to improve bus transit in Connecticut:

- increase hours of service and frequency of service;
- provide more weekend service;

-expand para-transit service;

-increase express bus service;

-implement Bus Rapid Transit along major corridors;

-increase interregional bus services; and

-increase commuter connections to rail stations in order to complement and enhance the state's investment in rail service.

The study detailed the many and varied benefits of increased bus transit.

Economic Benefits

- transit provides greater access to jobs and a larger labor pool for employers;
- better bus connections enhance the state's investments in rail and multi-modal systems;
- there are significant financial savings for households who choose transit over a private automobile;
- studies show that every \$1 invested in transit yields \$3 in economic benefits.

Environmental Benefits

- increased bus transit reduces highway congestion, decreases fuel consumption and fights global warming pollution;
- reduces toxic diesel soot through clean vehicle technology;
- supports “responsible growth” around stronger transit centers and fights sprawl.

Helps People of All Ages

- increases mobility and choice for existing and new bus customers, non-drivers, the elderly and disabled;
- increases opportunities for better jobs as well as access to more medical, education, recreation and other services;
- specialized services can reduce healthcare costs as seniors are able to “age in place” and remain in their homes.

During this difficult financial time, public transit is needed more than ever. Using public transit provides direct savings to residents and the State.

- Individuals can save money by using public transportation instead of a private vehicle. According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) American households can save up to \$8,754 annually by switching to public transportation.

- Employers who offer free parking could save more than \$750 per parking space that is no longer required.

- According to Governor Rell’s Budget summary for FY2003-FY2005, for each elderly individual that can age at home instead of a nursing home because of the mobility and access to health care furnished by public transit, the state of Connecticut saves \$3,500-\$4,000 per month.

- In addition, congestion cost commuters in Connecticut’s urban areas between \$343 and \$592 per traveler in 2005. This number represents additional fuel costs and the cost of extra travel time.

- Lower levels of traffic may allow the state to save money through less expenditure related to road repair and maintenance, as well as enforcement of traffic

laws.

- Society as a whole benefits from lower levels of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. (A medium sized car with an average mileage of 21 mpg, driven 10,000 miles per year, produces approximately 5 ½ tons of carbon dioxide a year.)

In order to achieve the benefits of increased bus transit, an investment of capital and operating funds is needed. To achieve an 80% increase in bus ridership, Transit for Connecticut recommends an increase of \$215 million in capital expenditures and an increase of \$63 million in operating funds. While capital funds are needed to purchase rolling stock, improve facilities and shelters, upgrade communication systems and fareboxes, operating funds are critical to putting vehicles on the road and providing necessary service. A dedicated, reliable funding source is needed for all transportation projects if Connecticut is to achieve a 21st Century transportation system and move our State and its residents forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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