TESTIMONY OF COMMISSIONER JOSEPH F. MARIE
CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

REGARDING

A 21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM: REDUCING GRIDLOCK, TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE, AND GROWING CONNECTICUT'S ECONOMY

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Good morning. I am Joseph F. Marie, Commissioner at the Connecticut Department of Transportation. I want to thank you for convening this hearing and allowing me to discuss the current and future transportation investment needs in Connecticut.

Our transportation infrastructure – our roads, bridges, ports, airports, buses, ferries, and trains – are essential to the economic well being of our state and our nation. In order to address the challenges in front of us and allow our citizens to prosper . . . our transportation system, while fundamentally safe and productive, must be preserved, strengthened and enhanced.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (Department), is unique amongst other state transportation agencies, as it owns and operates not only a highway system but also owns and operates two (2) commuter railroads, the New Haven Line and Shore Line East services which carry over thirty-four (34) million passengers a year. The state-wide bus services include twenty-one (21) bus operations, which carry over thirty-five (35) million passengers per year – the state owns three of the largest and supports the remaining 19 bus services. The state also owns and operates six (6) public airports including Bradley International Airport – New England's second largest airport, two ferry services and one deep water seaport. In addition, the state participates in subsidizing several bus transit operations, dial-ride services, job access mobility services and other transportation demand services. A truly intermodal – operational - transportation agency.

Our transportation needs are many and all of this is taking place during a time when the cost of doing business is colliding with a current economic crisis.

This will require tough choices ahead for our state and the nation. I can tell you that we are not alone. I have had the chance to talk with many of my peers from around the country and our state is not alone.

Many would argue that the state of our nation's infrastructure has also reached crisis mode. In our state, the average age of our bridges is more than 50 years old and ranks as one of the highest in the nation for age of bridges.

Over the past several years, Governor Rell and the General Assembly have overwhelmingly endorsed bold, comprehensive and multi-modal transportation initiatives that have provided a major start on long overdue measures to meet Connecticut's transportation needs and assist the Department in its mission.

The Governor's 2005 Transportation Initiative was the largest capital investment in two decades in Connecticut's transportation system and included $667 million for new rail cars for use on the New Haven Line and Shore Line East; $300 million for new rail maintenance facilities; $187 million for operational improvements and congestion mitigation measures for I-95 between Greenwich and North Stonington; $150 million for improvements to other state and interstate roads; and $7.5 million for new transit buses.

A year later, the Governor and General Assembly approved another multi-modal transportation bill that provided for important projects such as the New Britain – Hartford Busway and the New Haven – Hartford – Springfield (NH-HFD-SPR) Commuter Rail Service including shuttle service to Bradley International Airport. Both projects had been under consideration for many years and outlined in the Department's Master Plan and will provide the needed expansion to support mobility and will support economic development. The 2006 initiative also supported the rehabilitation of rail passenger coaches for use in commuter service, the West Haven/Orange Rail Station and parking, capital improvements on the Branch Lines**,** parking improvements on the New Haven Line, Shore Line East and the Branch Lines, highway infrastructure improvements projects and rail links to the port of New Haven.

Again in 2007, the Governor and General Assembly continued their commitment to improve and enhance the transportation system in Connecticut. In particular, a "Fix it First" program for the rehabilitation and rebuilding of roads and bridges was established for fiscal years 2007 and 2008 - $60 million for roads and $90 million for bridges. Rail station improvements identified in the New Haven Line Train Station Visual Inspection Report ($6 million total) and a parking garage at the Stamford Transportation Center.

All these projects all have significant transportation benefits for travelers and commuters as well as opportunities for transit orientated development and the Department has been aggressively working on their implementation since passage of that bill.

The state of Connecticut has provided specific transportation funding investments that will build upon our regular federal transportation program in order to continue a balanced approach so that Connecticut's transportation system enhances the general quality of life, economic development, and increase in productivity and movement of people and goods in a safe, efficient manner.

In fact, in 2007, CT had the highest per capita state investment in transit funding, followed by our boarder states – Massachusetts and New York. The importance and significance of passenger rail service is clearly demonstrated in Connecticut.

While we're enhancing and expanding transit services in state, we still have significant preservation challenges ahead.

<u>(ConnDOT's capitol needs)</u>

In order to provide a safe, efficient transportation system that meets the mobility needs of people and freight within the state and the region, the Department has identified a five point action plan that identifies the major areas for prioritizing and emphasizing investments for all modes of transportation –

- Preservation – State of Good Repair;
- System Modification (Safety);
- System Productivity – Efficiency;
- Economic and Environmental Impact – Quality of Life; and
- Strategic Capacity Improvements.

While our needs on our highways and bridges are great, for purposes of this hearing, I'm going to focus on the capitol needs for public transportation.

On the rail side, the Department's major capital improvements needed for state of good repair and system capacity improvements include the following:

• New M8 Rail Cars – (380 cars)	$686 M (CT share)	Funded
o M4/M6 Rehab/Replacement	$210 M (CT share)	Unfunded
• New Haven Rail Yard Expansion		
o Tier 1	$847M	Funded
o Tier 2 Car Wash	$ 57M	Unfunded
o Tier 3 Deferred Elements	$178M	Unfunded
• Modernization of Catenary/Moveable Bridges – New Haven Line		
o C1B	$140M	Funded
o C1A	$600M	Unfunded
o C2	$975M	Unfunded
• Mainline Signal System	$310M	Unfunded
• Track Program	$200M	Funded
• Positive Train Control	$52M (CT Share)	Unfunded
• New Haven-Hartford-Springfield	$600 - $700M	Unfunded
• Shore Line East Station Expansion	$97M	$40M Funded $57M Unfunded

Summary:	Total	$5.052B
Funded		$1.913B
Shortfall		$3.139B

The projects I have noted reflect current estimates of *major* rail capital needs and does not account for other routine capital maintenance needs.

It is important to note that in addition to these projects, there will likely be further system enhancements as a result of the Department's ongoing branch-line studies. Early estimates on the Danbury Branch alone are somewhere in the vicinity of $300 million with passing sidings, track realignment, electrification Norwalk-Danbury and extension to New Milford. Station and parking improvements and year of expenditure considerations would likely increase this amount. While no estimates have been developed to date for the New Canaan and Waterbury branches, there will also be significant improvements identified once the studies are complete.

Shore Line East will also require necessary catenary and capacity enhancement improvements.

On the transit side, the Department's major capital improvements needed for state of good repair and system capacity improvements include the following:

- Systemwide Bus Replacements — $270M (Partially Funded)
- Systemwide Bus Mid Life Overhauls — $ 20M (Unfunded)
- New Britain-Hartford Busway — $569M (Partially Funded)
- CT Transit – Hartford Facility Rehab — $ 30M (Partially Funded)
- Waterbury Bus Maintenance Facility — $120M (Partially Funded)
- Northwest Transit District Maintenance Facility — $ 20M (Partially Funded)
- Windham Transit District Maintenance Facility — $ 20M (Partially Funded)
- Southeast Area Transit Maintenance Facility — $ 20M (Partially Funded)
- Housatonic Area Transit Maintenance Facility — $ 3M (Funded)
- Greater Hartford Transit District – Union Station — $ 20M (Partially Funded)
- Greater NH Transit District Maintenance Facility — $ 30M (Unfunded)
- Milford Transit District Facility — $ 15M (Unfunded)
- Systemwide Intelligent Bus Investments (Fareboxes, radios, AVL) — $ 40M (Unfunded)

Not included in what I have discussed is what it would take to modernize existing freight lines to support regional growth.

Ridership on the New Haven Line is up 3.9% and 18.1% on Shore Line East. Ridership on our statewide transit system was also up 4% over the last twelve months. Connecticut has continually upgraded and improved its New Haven Line, over which Metro-North and Amtrak operates, to a tune of over $120 million annually.

While the State has made significant investments over the past few years, our ability to keep pace with systems infrastructure requirements will be problematic. In order to expand rail service within the state, we will need additional federal funding in the next authorization bill. If not, we're ultimately going to have to balance our state of good repair needs with system expansion.

In all of these efforts, the federal government is a critical partner in the success of these initiatives.

Transportation Authorization. SAFETEA-LU provided Connecticut an estimated $3.2 billion for highways and $713 million for transit (FFY 2004 – 2009). This amounts to about 66% of Connecticut's transportation program.

AASHTO has calculated that Congress should fund a $545 billion multi-modal program, including highways, public transit, intercity passenger rail and freight

The Department and the Northeast region both believe that there needs to be a strong federal role in transportation policy and financial investment is essential to achieving the mobility that underlies the broader public policy goals. As Congress begins to debate the next transportation authorization bill, it's important that investment levels over the longer term correlate with documented needs.

The Department has been working over the last few years with organizations such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the Council of Northeast Governors (CONEG) and the Northeast Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (NASTO) on authorization principles as well as program specific recommendations. It is fair to say there are many similarities in their surface transportation authorization principles that advocate for:

- A strong federal role in a comprehensive national transportation policy;
- An increased federal financial investment;
- A financial commitment and strategy to preserve and maintain the existing transportation infrastructure, including highways, transit and rail;
- Commit to policies that will ensure investments are made strategically;
- Expanding revenue sources;
- Investing holistically;
- Improving program administration - Simplifying federal transportation programs and regulatory processes and reducing project delivery time to create a more efficient and effective transportation programs;
- Integrating federal policy and strategic investment for all modes of passenger and freight transportation, including the development and collection of adequate and appropriate data for all modes; and

- Strengthening support for transit and intercity passenger rail to provide energy efficient and environmentally sound options for managing the carbon footprint of transportation systems.

We need policies that support maximum flexibility for the states and maintain the existing flexibilities of the current surface transportation programs that allow for the inclusion of rail projects. Given the magnitude and diversity of needs, state and local governments should be provided with the maximum discretion to make the investments that are right for our state, local and regional requirements

Continuation or modification of surface transportation authorization transit programs are necessary. For example, the Department recommends simplifying the New Starts and Small Starts Program, continuation of the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) Loan Program, the Rail Line Relocation and Improvement Program and the Fixed Guideway Modernization Program. The current formula for Fixed Guideway is extremely beneficial to States like Connecticut and New York whose transit systems operate over established older networks.

Transit is a particularly important regional asset in the Northeast, providing mobility for ten billion riders annually within and among communities, both urban and rural. Effective transit systems can provide energy efficient and environmentally sound options for managing the carbon footprint of transportation systems.

Public transportation also contributes to creating economic growth. APTA estimates that every $10 million in public transportation capital investment yields $30 million in increased business sales, and that every $10 million in operating investment in public transportation yields $32 million in increased business sales. Further, every $1 taxpayers invest in public transportation generates $6 in economic returns.

Transit is clearly an integral part of the national transportation system and must continue to receive sustained, assured dedicated federal funding.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to discuss Connecticut’s current and future transportation needs as you begin the process of drafting surface transportation authorization legislation. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.