



Connecticut's Imperative: Expand Public Transportation to Grow the Economy

Prepared by
Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT)
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“We need a plan that takes our roads and rails and ports and links them together. Linking them together remakes the finest, most elaborate system of transportation that the world has ever known into its 21st century incarnation.”

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx . US Department of Transportation website

Public Transportation Saves the State and Its Citizens Money

Connecticut faces many challenges in the coming years, but maintaining and expanding our transportation needs, both operational and capital, are critical to the economic viability of the state. According to the latest Texas A & M Urban Mobility Report the hours spent waiting in traffic and the commensurate congestion alone amounted to a staggering \$1.3 billion cost to the Hartford, New Haven and Stamford/Bridgeport areas. Additionally, state drivers lose an average of 35 to 42 hours per year due to traffic congestion.

According to the Commuter Savings Calculator of the American Public Transportation Association, for a commuter driving a standard-sized vehicle which gets 18 miles/gallon, a 50 mile round trip with gas at \$2.65/gallon and parking at \$10/day would spend \$4,821 to commute by car. But, that same driver would only spend \$648 commuting by public bus transportation (\$2.70 round trip) for a total savings of \$4,173. If households used one less vehicle, they'd save \$9,749.¹ For those who do not or cannot own a car, public transit provides a vital conduit between them and their work, doctor's appointments, shopping and entertainment. But cost is not the only consideration: available, affordable public transportation is handily found on quality-of-life checklists of attractive places to live. Connecticut's buses enable people to move conveniently and safely throughout Connecticut and also connects them to hubs allowing travel throughout the Tri-State area and beyond.

Do Lower Gas Prices Signal a Decrease in Public Transportation Utilization?

The recent decline in the price of gas may have some wondering if public transportation is still as attractive a prospect to people with cars as it is when the price of gas is much higher. There are, of course, other costs associated with car ownership – maintenance, insurance, depreciation of the vehicle through use, part replacement. In today's world of smart phones and near full-connectivity, Connecticut's buses do not just provide a reprieve for car owners from the wear-and-tear of driving to work every morning or an inexpensive option for getting from home to a destination (without pricey and often unavailable taxis or livery cabs), they also allow Connecticut's workers to increase their productivity. There is an upsurge in interest from millennials in public transportation, and all generations recognize that their work day can start not when they step in the door of their office but instead the minute they step onto the bus and sit down. On Connecticut buses, which are equipped with WiFi, you will find lots of small bright screens, as bus riders use the quiet, comfortable ride to check email, draft spreadsheets and review documents.

“The federal excise tax on gasoline and diesel fuel currently generates about \$1.75 billion of revenues per penny of tax. Of this total, \$1.4 billion per penny of tax is deposited into the Highway Account and used to finance the federal highway program. The remaining \$350 million per penny of tax is deposited into the Mass Transit Account and used to finance the federal public transportation program.”

www.artba.org

Connecticut Has Not Met the Demand for Public Transportation

Despite the ready demand for public transportation services and the economic and environmental benefits of increased ridership on public transportation, 70 Connecticut towns still have either limited or no public bus transportation.

2014 Legislative Budget

The 2014 Legislative Session resulted in the following: adequate funding to maintain existing levels of bus service; operational and capital funds needed for CTfastrak to begin operations in February of 2015; a reduction of \$500,000 in transportation employment improvement program funds which was \$500,000 less than originally proposed; the passage of the vulnerable user bill that imposes a fine on anyone who, while driving a car or other motor vehicle, seriously injures or kills a person reasonably using a public

roadway; and the unanimous passage by the transportation committee of a resolution that proposed an amendment to the state constitution limiting the use of moneys in the special transportation fund. This resolution was not brought to the floor for a vote in the House and Senate. A number of bills have been proposed this year concerning a lock on the Special Transportation Fund.

Transit Projects & Service Upgrades 2014

While funding sources continue to fluctuate, some examples of upgrades & service changes:

CTTransit:

- Hired 100 new operators for their Hartford Division, bringing the CTTransit workforce to over 1,000 employees
- A new fare collection system is being introduced with CTfastrak which will be rolled out eventually in all divisions (this will include the use of account-based “smart” cards and mobile fare payment using a smart phone app)
- CTfastrak will have off-board fare payment with proof-of-purchase inspection so passengers can purchase single-ride tickets or all-day passes from vending machines on the busway station platforms
- The Hartford CTTransit fuel cell bus technology has ended, but they are moving ahead with a project to install a stationary fuel cell generator at the Hamden garage, similar to one that had operated for two years in Hartford.

Greater Bridgeport Transit

- Utilizing funds from FTA and matched by the State, continued to make improvements to their maintenance facility (2012-2015)
- Continued implementing new services under the Jobs Access Reverse Commute Program (JARC), providing more than 640,000 boarding’s annually (1999-2015)
- Installing up to 60 new bus shelters, an on-going project
- Undertaking of an Alternative Modes Analysis and Regional Transit Plan update (Stratford, Bridgeport, Fairfield) – Underway

Middletown Area Transit

- Completed a 19,000 sq. ft. Bus Storage and Maintenance Facility, the Thomas A. Cheeseman Transportation Center (former MAT Administrator) (\$12,272,000 cost funded through FTA, CONNDOT, DEEP and MAT) which includes geo-thermal heating & air conditioning, an air-flow interchange system, high efficiency lamps and fixtures and more.

Milford Transit District

- construction of a transit hub at the Connecticut Post Mall in Milford at a cost of \$500,000

Windham Regional Transit District

- Construction of a long needed 2000 sq. ft. new administration, with a separate cold storage building that can hold about 30 vehicles. The current project budget is \$10,585,757.00.

Greater New Haven Transit District

- Construction of a North Haven Bus Shelter
- Snow removal system and fuel pump replacement
- On-going facility renovations, support equipment, new vehicle-bus procurement

“One goal of future investments should be to support sustainable economic development around existing stations and, where appropriate, build new stations.”

(RPA) Getting Back on Track, January, 2014

Bus Operations in Connecticut

The Bus Operations line item in the Department of Transportation (CDOT) budget funds the CDOT share of the operating deficit for urban fixed route services, demand-respond services (non-ADA), rural transit services, commuter express and shuttle bus services. Passenger trips increased from 41,406,109 trips in FY2013 to 43,201,928 trips in FY 2014; 1,029,014 rides more or a 4% increase in ridership.

Urban Public Bus Services provided 42,172,914 trips in FY 2014. The cost for these rides:

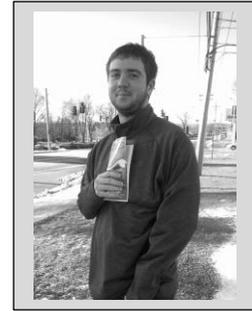
- Operating deficit was \$138,436,367
- CDOT share was \$133,014,512
- Local funding was \$3,408,129
- Federal subsidy \$1,613,089

Rural Transit Services provided 466,184 trips in FY 2014:

- Estuary Transit District
- Middletown Area Transit District
- Northeastern CT Transit District
- Northwestern CT Transit District
- Windham Region Transit District

The cost for the Rural Transit Service rides in FY 2014 was:

- Operating deficit was \$3,642,388
- CDOT share was \$1,160,750
- Local funding was \$866,834
- Federal subsidy was \$1,613,089



Michael Gootkin, Norwich.
"Using the bus is alot better than walking and warmer!"

"Public transportation use in the United States reduces our nation's carbon emissions by 37 million metric tons annually. This is equivalent to Washington, DC; New York City; Atlanta; Denver; and Los Angeles combined stopping using electricity."

(APTA)

Transportation Employment Independence Program

The Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP) of the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) provides funding for a variety of programs and services managed by the five regional job access partnerships in the state. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT) manages a portion of Connecticut's Job Access Program. This bus service connects people to job centers. The proposed 2014 mid-term budget cut TEIP funding by \$1million on July 2014, but \$500,000 was restored by Legislature. In FY 2014 funding was:

- CDOT bus operations \$3,957,310
- FTA grants \$1,317,899 a
- TEIP (through DSS) \$3,028,671 (FY 13 \$2,812,708)

Utilizing a variety of transit options, workers and job seekers were able to reach workplaces and daycare that was previously inaccessible due to limited service hours of pre-existing public transportation or geographical limitations. "Loss of Jobs Access transportation services all too often translate into loss of employment, especially for those working second shift or non-traditional hours."²

The Transportation for Employment Independence Program reductions in service further erode an individual's ability to get to their job and leaves citizens stranded with no options. Continued reductions in TEIP funding can affect the public by the loss of evening service, Sunday morning or evening services and weekend service which impacts jobs and the economy. The proposed 2015 biennial budget cuts \$2.4 million from the DSS budget, but adds \$1.9 million to the DOT budget to cover program costs.

"I don't think transportation should just help us get places better, it should help us make places better — and help improve the quality of life of people all across our country."

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx . www.streetblog.org

ADA Para-Transit Program

The ADA mandates paratransit services be available to qualified persons on a reservation basis, during the same hours of operation and serving the same geographical area (within ¼ of a mile) of a fixed bus route

service. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a federal civil rights law prohibits discrimination and therefore Connecticut residents who have a disability that impairs their ability to use the accessible and affordable fixed route public bus service for their mobility needs rely on the paratransit services. The first appropriation to the Dial-A-Ride (DAR) line item was made in FY 1999 to offset the loss of federal operating funds (Sec. 5307) used by five public transit operators for demand responsive transportation services (ADA and Non-ADA) in the urban areas of Bridgeport, Milford, Greater New Haven, Middletown and Greater Hartford. In 2006, the General Assembly eliminated the DAR line item and created the ADA Para Transit Program and the Non-ADA Dial-Ride Program as two separate budget line items.⁵

The State appropriation to the ADA Para-Transit Program provides the majority of funding for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandated services. In FY 2014 in Connecticut residents used ADA Para-Transit services for 1,007,508 trips, an increase of 145,263 trips more than FY 2013.

- Operating deficit was \$32,280,160
- CDOT share was \$31,510,370
- Local funding was \$495,137
- There was no federal subsidy

CDOT funds 100% of the operational deficit of the public transit operators and private carriers who provide ADA mandated services to the fixed route services of state-owned CTRTRANSIT. The operation deficit for ADA mandated services to transit district-owned fixed route service is not fully funded by CDOT. In FY 2014 five public transit operators utilized local subsidies for a total of \$\$495,137 in local funds to offset their deficit.

- Norwalk Transit District (for Westport, Norwalk, Stamford) \$282,489
- Windham Transit District \$18,396
- Southeast Area Transit \$30,761
- Valley Transit \$13,081
- Middletown Area Transit District \$ \$150,410
- Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority \$0
- Milford Transit District \$0
- Housatonic Area Regional Transit \$0



Frederick Cilbrith, III on the train going from Milford to Bridgeport to get to his classes at Housatonic Community College.
"The best part of taking the bus and train for me is being able to connect socially to the world. Otherwise, I would be isolated at home. I like the fact that I can depend on myself for transportation"

Non-ADA-Dial-A-Ride

This service provides demand responsive services to the elderly and persons with disabilities. In 2014, the Connecticut General Assembly appropriated \$576,361 to the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT) Non-ADA-Dial-A-Ride budget line to fund CTDOT's share to

- Greater Hartford Transit District \$359,590
- Greater New Haven Transit District \$65,917
- Middletown Transit District \$112,332
- Milford Transit District \$38,522

Within CTDOT's Urban transit budget line item, \$1,349,742 funds (and there is no local subsidy)

- Valley Transit District \$680,024
- North East Transportation Co. \$669,718

"Place a transit line where it will connect a lot of people to a lot of jobs and give it as much grade-separated right-of-way as possible, and it will attract a lot of riders."

The Secrets of Successful Transit Projects-Revealed, Payton Chung, usa.streetblog.org, July 10, 2014.

State Matching Grants for Demand Responsive Transportation (CGS 13b-38bb)

In FY 2014, the state matching grant program to municipalities (CGS 13b-38bb. Fund allocation is based on a formula in state statutes. 50% based on elderly population/50% on town square mileage) continued to provide demand responsive transportation services for the elderly and people with disabilities in 136

Connecticut towns. Historically the allocation was \$5 million, in FY 2011 and 2012, funding was cut by 25%, having an immediate and profound impact. During FY 2013, \$3,351,689 was allocated (or 75% of the town allocations). For FY 2014 Commissioner Redeker brought the fund back to its \$5 million level. The state matching grants have allowed family members to keep their jobs with the knowledge that their loved ones are safely transported to their destinations. This has also provided access to needed medical care, which keeps people healthier and living independently at a greater cost savings to the state. The transportation allows seniors and people with disabilities to shop and spend their money on goods and services, thereby helping the economy. And finally, this transportation provides a quality of life for seniors and people with disabilities, which otherwise wouldn't be possible.

“Connecticut’s economic future and our ability to grow jobs are tied directly to the condition of our roads, bridges, ports, buses and rails, even to our walkways and bikeways.”

Governor Malloy, Delivering his Budget Address to the General Assembly, Hartford, CT., Feb. 18, 2015

Special Transportation Fund

Governor O’Neil originally created the Special Transportation Fund in 1983 following the collapse of the Mianus River Bridge with revenues to be used for transportation related projects. According to OPM’s Fiscal Summary FY2013-14 Special Transportation Fund revenues are collected from various sources:

- Licenses, Permits, Fees, 10.4%
- Federal Grants, 1%
- Sales Tax-DMV, 5.8%
- Oil Company Tax, 28.1%
- Motor Vehicle Receipts, 17.5%
- Interest Income, 0.3%
- Motor Fuels Tax, 36.9%

Adam Boekman,
The Kennedy Center
Adam uses both the bus and train. This gives him the freedom to go to school in Connecticut and be able to go to New York when he wants to visit his family.



Those revenues are then allocated to

- Debt Service, 37.4% (for general obligation bonds, special tax obligation bonds)
- Dept. of Motor Vehicles, 4.7%
- Fringe Benefits & Other, 14.4% (state employee fringe benefits, state insurance & risk management board, and other miscellaneous accounts)
- DOT – Operating, 20.6%
- DOT – Public Transportation 22.9%

OPM noted that motor fuels revenue has been declining, “down from 55.4% in FY 2003”, with a “cumulative decline in Motor Fuels Tax revenue of 11.5%” from FY 2006 through FY 2014.

“If we’re going to tackle our backlog of repairing and rebuilding, then there’s another part of the equation we have to tackle, too – and that’s cost, but what if we could make that funding equal more projects – and better ones?”

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. US Department of Transportation website

Budgets & Visions for Transportation

“Connecticut residents, businesses, workers, and visitors deserve a reliable transportation system that moves people and goods on time, every time.”³

Governor Malloy released his proposed 2 year, \$40 million budget on February 18, 2015 with a five-year ramp up transportation infrastructure plan *“Let’s Go CT!”* which includes, paratransit and bus service expansions, CTfastrak to Manchester, real-time location & bus information, bus rapid transit from Norwalk to Stamford, expanded bike & pedestrian connectivity along with reconfiguration, relocations

and expansions of state highways, bridge repairs, New Haven Line upgrades and more (transformct.com). Transit advocates have long urged legislators to not divert Special Transportation Funds to the general fund and Governor Malloy noted “If we’re going to plan for the long-term, Connecticut needs a strong transportation lock box that ensures every dollar raised for transportation is spent on transportation.” President Obama’s 2016 budget summary plan for transportation is “to make critical new investments in our roads, bridges, transit systems and freight networks as part of a \$478 billion, six-year surface transportation reauthorization.”

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)

This federal reauthorization law (P.L. 112-141) was enacted in June 2012 by Congress to provide investments in both transportation and highway improvements, set performance standards and goals for the programs, initiate a national freight program and streamline the federal highway program structure. H.R. 5021 passed on July 15, 2014, keeps the Highway Trust Fund solvent through May 31, 2015. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx conducted a week long bus tour recently to push for the Obama proposal to fund transportation. Failure to reauthorize funding will have a profound impact on Connecticut’s transportation projects.

“...if you don’t have access to public transit, you can’t use it. Access matters. We need to expand public transportation access so more people have travel choices. The percentage of public transportation use would be much higher if more people could use it.” (APTA)

Forums & Workshops

AARP, CACT, North East Transportation Co. and Transit for CT hosted the “*Transit Roundtable: Successes, Challenges and Your Community*” on April 23, 2014 at Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury. The group was welcomed by Karen Burnaska from Transit for CT. James Troup, Provost & Senior Dean of Administration, Naugatuck Valley Community College said the UPASS (\$10 per student per semester), is an unlimited bus rides pass for students enrolled in college. (20% of their college students have no access to a car). One student noted that “UPASS enables me to get back and forth to college”. “We are losing out on potential students because of a lack of transit” said Jim, but the UPASS has made the difference for so many students. North East Transportation Co. President Barbara Kalosky talked about the need to keep bus service reliable, efficient and affordable with the need to “keep current services funded”. Barbara said it was important to have bus stop shelters so riders are comfortable while they wait. Jonathan Rubell from The Kennedy Center said they were “trying to take the mystery out of taking public transportation” by offering Understanding Public Transportation Workshops. He said there have been funding “victories and defeats” but the funding cuts to the TEIP program have the greatest impact on those most vulnerable. AARP State Director Nora Duncan described the complete streets audit they conducted in the East Street section of Bridgeport, noting they found a number of issues including no handicap cuts in sidewalks and bus stops. Nora said people want to “age in place”. “1,000 low income works are transported to work using TEIP funding said Northwest Reg. Workforce Investment Board, Inc., Executive Director, Cathy Awaad. “Any further cuts (in TEIP) would affect the low wage workers”. Connecticut has a “disconnected transit system” and the Waterbury area has become a “net exporter of people” said Sam Gold, COG of Central Naugatuck Valley Executive Director. Sam saw the CTfastrak project as the most substantial and exciting transit initiative in years. The Jobs Access Program began 15 years ago by bringing the right people to the table and “partnerships are what make things happen” noted Mike Sanders, CONNDOT Public Transit Administrator Office of Transit and Ridesharing. The new TransformCT initiative is an opportunity to find out what the public wants, to quantify the value of public transportation and eventually develop a strategic planning document that includes both a policy and budget component. We need “to find the right solution for the right problem”.

CACT, AARP, SCRCOG, Transit for CT and Greater New Haven Transit District hosted next the “*Transit Roundtable: Successes, Challenges and Your Community*” on November 18, 2014 Greater New Haven Transit District in Hamden. Hamden Mayor Scott Jackson welcomed the attendees noting how important

it is “to create the right connections”. The demographics are changing and it’s important to accommodate those shifts said GNHTD General Manager Donna Carter. GNHTD started a 501(c)3 foundation to help people afford transportation because it just “makes sense”. Providing one on one travel training, outlining the various transportation options available, exploring volunteer driver programs, utilizing the Taxi Voucher Program are just some of the activities The Kennedy Center is involved in said Mobility Manager Jonathan Rubell. “Buses need to improve their images” noted SCRCOG Executive Director Carl Amento. Representing more than 2500 businesses from sole proprietors, Executive Director, Tony Rescigno, from Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce wondered how “do we get more businesses to focus on the good things we provide....we need to refocus on the good, not the bad.” The New York to New Haven corridor offers opportunities for growth particularly with Union Station, buses and Tweed Airport. Workplace Executive Director Joe Carbone noted it is very practical to have public transportation and more than 40% of the area jobs are part time. “Transportation is mobility... transportation is access”, said Mike Sanders, CONNDOT Public Transit Administrator Office of Transit and Ridesharing, but “jobs aren’t going where transit is.”

A Dec. 3, 2015 public forum entitled “*Getting to Work: Transportation and Jobs Access for the 21st Century*” focused on how public transportation provides job access and ever-changing technology attracts new riders. “Transportation is critical to advancing a productive economy” with 30% of metro jobs accessible by transit said keynote speaker Robert Puentes, of the Metropolitan Policy Program of the Brookings Institution. He noted there are three strategies for success: make job access a key part of the transportation decision making, strengthen economic connections & partnerships, and become a “Can Do” state when it comes to funding and finance. For twenty-three years, Anne I. Hayes of Travelers has taken the bus to work. Traveler’s holds transit fairs for employees know what their options are. Anna M. Barry and Mike Saunders of ConnDOT were excited about the opening of CTfastrak. “We are building it and the people will come” said Anna. In a 2013 survey of 713 coastal link riders, Doug Holcomb of Greater Bridgeport Transit noted that 90% use the bus to go to work and ridership overall is up. “With CTfastrak, the tri-state region’s first bus rapid transit system with a dedicated busway, launching in spring 2015, and the Hartford Line commuter rail launch in 2016, residents, employees, businesses, and visitors will have more options beyond the car. Continued transit investment and increased support for mixed-use/income development and walkability around existing and new bus and rail hubs in places such as Stamford or Hartford are also essential to creating job and housing options for all,” said Veronica Vanterpool, executive director for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.⁴



Hearing From the Transit Riders

"I feel that the more people we can get to use public transportation, the better a system we can develop and expand. Not everyone can, should, or wants to drive a car. Not only do I save money by taking the bus, I stay in shape by walking, and...it is a very important environmental issue to use as few vehicles as possible."

Elizabeth Perlmen Cole, GBT, Passenger Advisory Committee Member

"On a scale of 1-10 I would give the service an 8, the drivers are helpful and personable – they are wonderful. However, the service does get busy at certain times of day and it would be nice to be able to travel to Monroe and other places in the region that we cannot currently reach. Without services like this, where would we be? We would be home twiddling our thumbs. When you want to be part of the mainstream, we would be denied"

Joseph, GBT Bus Rider

"Yesterday was a mess, but I must commend my driver for ensuring my safety and going out of his way to ensure I didn't get left behind. He was very patient and dealt professionally with the delay."

CTTransit Bus Rider (following a recent snow storm)

"I use the bus a lot. I live in Guilford because I am in the second phase of the Entrance Program. Every day I take the bus from Guilford all the way to Westbrook. I transfer buses in Madison at the Gazebo by Stop and Shop. I also take the bus to work at CVS in Clinton two days a week. I need to be on time to my classes and my job, if I am not on-time I will not be able to get paid. I am able to be independent in getting to my places because of 9Town Transit. Taking the bus is cheaper than Vista Van Rides and it makes me feel more independent. My mom and dad are proud of me because I take the bus by myself. Taking the bus independently makes me proud of myself and proud of my peers."

Danielle Garley, Estuary Transit District Passenger

"... my morning (8am) bus driver ... has been my introduction to riding CT Transit buses. She is pleasant and courteous to all and most importantly, is a very safe and competent driver (especially during these challenging storms). Thank you ... for making the morning commute an easy and pleasant journey."

CTTransit Bus Rider

"I am writing to sing the praises of the driver of my bus. I take the Hartford express from Southington ... [my driver] has always make me feel safe and comfortable taking the bus...Her kindness and eager willingness to perform her role joyously and effectively was such a comfort to me...knowing that the driver of the bus you are riding is looking out for you goes a long way. I am really grateful for everything [she] does and thought it was about time I recognized her for it. I hope you do too."

CTTransit Bus Rider

Moving Forward

A balanced and multi-modal system requires funding, and reauthorization of MAP-21 is a first step. Stable, sustainable investments in transportation will enable Connecticut and America to move forward by providing mobility choices, alleviate traffic congestion, invest in the economy and reduce emissions. The Governor has proposed a \$2.8 billion five-year transportation *Let's Go CT!* plan and an overall 30-year vision and list of transportation projects plan. How to fund these proposals will require creativity, leadership, patience, excellent communication with clear funding options so the public understands what they will be gaining.

"...it will always be more attractive to raid the special transportation fund to smooth over budget deficits when the alternative could mean cutting government services or raising taxes..."

www.HartfordBuisness.com

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