

Riding the Bus

The Pace of Investment in Public Transportation

Prepared by Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) - February 24, 2011

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Transportation

“We have an opportunity here, quite literally, to get Connecticut moving again. Right now, notorious highway congestion is a drag on our economy, environment, and quality of life. Building Connecticut starts from the ground up. Improving the services that make us go will bring opportunity to the state. Connecticut will make the investment as well, but we have to be aggressive about pursuing federal dollars.”

Governor Daniel Malloy
Jan. 28, 2011



Bus service in Connecticut is part of a multi-modal transportation system that provides residents and travelers with transportation that:

- is an affordable option for getting to work, college, shopping, entertainment, medical facilities, recreation, entertainment and other local and statewide services;
- supports transit oriented design models, a greener economy and walkable communities;
- reduces fuel consumption and the subsequent cost savings, congestion and the increasing gridlock on our highways, reduces the carbon footprint, and;
- saves the State of Connecticut approximately \$4000 (per senior) per month in potential nursing home costs for seniors who can't drive but want to stay in their homes.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) noted in August 2010 when gas was an average of \$2.72 per gallon, that riding public transportation saved \$9,381 annually along with an annual average of \$1,850 for parking. By riding public transportation a person can save \$782 per month. Prices at the gas pump continue to rise and there has been speculation that fuel will rise to \$5.00 per gallon according to comments made by former Shell Oil Company President John Hofmeister.

Congestion, Fuel Consumption, and the Carbon Footprint in Connecticut

The Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M has been studying traffic congestion for years and it comes as no surprise to anyone who travels in Connecticut that traffic worsens every year. The report's findings for the three largest urban areas in Connecticut are listed in the table below.

2010 Urban Mobility Report			
Urban Area	Hours of Delay	Excess Fuel Consumed	Congestion Cost
Bridgeport-Stamford	20,972,000	18,730,000	\$507,000,000
Hartford	14,129,000	11,731,000	\$264,000,000
New Haven	11,956,000	10,716,000	\$285,000,000
TOTAL	470,570,000	411,770,000	\$1,056,000,000

Excerpt from the Urban Mobility Report: *"The new data and analysis changes the way the mobility information can be presented and how the problems are evaluated. The changes for the 2010 report are summarized below. Hour-by-hour speeds collected from a variety of sources on every day of the year on most major roads are used in the 101 detailed study areas and the 338 other urban areas. For more information about INRIX, go to www.inrix.com. An improved speed estimation process was built from the new data for major roads without detailed speed data. The data for all 24 hours makes it possible to track congestion problems for the midday, overnight and weekend time periods."*¹

The new Urban Mobility Data is significantly different from previously reported data because they utilized data from INRIX (a private sector provider), who collected data on an hourly basis from various sources. "We have a great deal more confidence in the numbers we now have for the chaotic years of 2007, 2008 & 2009," researcher Shawn Turner said. "Thanks to technology, we are using data that simply could not have been gathered a few years ago."²

When a transit rider selects a bus as their mode of transportation instead of driving for a 20 mile round trip commute to the workplace, this reduces 4800 pounds of CO₂ emissions per year.

Despite the economic and environmental benefits of increased ridership on public transportation for state residents, the State's investment is insufficient to close the 1.8 million hour gap in the amount of bus service provided per year compared to the need identified in the 2007 Bus Transit Needs Analysis conducted by Urbitran Associates for Transit for Connecticut. The study recommended increasing the amount of bus service statewide by 81% to meet the needs of residents, employees, and employers.

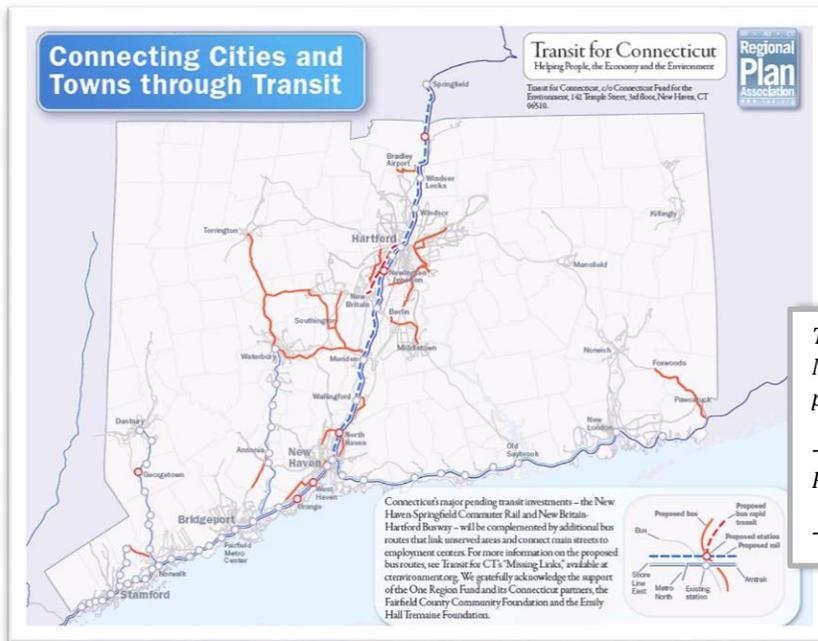
To increase bus service statewide by 81%, Connecticut needs to invest an additional 63.6 million annually in operating expenses (assuming a farebox recovery of 20%) and make a total capital investment of \$215.4 million to purchase new equipment to operate new services and to purchase new and replacement equipment necessary to provide needed amenities and technology in the 21st Century.

The Connecticut General Assembly invested \$5 million in Buses for 21st Century Mobility (PA 08-155) for the operations of enhanced, expanded, and new bus services in FY 2009. The funds for the planned bus services were cut in the budget deficit mitigation legislation passed on November 24, 2008.

FY 2010 Connecticut's Investment in Public Bus Transportation

In FY 2010 Connecticut continues to have limited or no public bus transportation available to 70 Connecticut towns. Surveys show that 60% of transit trips are for getting to and from work, with school and shopping trips the second and third most common reasons. Additionally, nearly 60% of transit trips are "started when passengers reach their transit vehicle by walking to a station or street stop...and most transit riders walk to their destination after leaving a transit vehicle." (APTA).

Of the more than 3.5 million residents, 13.9% are 65 or older based on 2009 US census bureau statistics. (APTA) There will be a 64% increase between 2006 and 2030 of residents 65 and older, while the working residents will increase by only 5%. (CT Commission on Aging) This growing population means more seniors will be working past retirement and opting to age in place.



Transit for Connecticut, January 2011 Map outlining Connecticut's major pending transit investments:

- New Haven Springfield Commuter Rail
- New Britain Hartford Busway

“Improving access to public transportation is the best way to lessen the pattern of isolation and provide seniors with transportation choices. Increased federal investment in public transportation can help communities meet the growing needs of our aging population for generations to come.” --William W. Millar, President, American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

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. In FY 2010, the public chose these bus services for 36,598,184 trips.

Urban Public Bus Services provided 35,533,502 trips in FY 2010. The cost for these rides:

- Operating deficit was \$105,097,990
- CDOT share was \$102,589,340
- Local funding was \$2,783,422
- There was no federal contribution

Rural Transit Services provided 362,287 trips in FY 2010. The cost for these rides:

- Operating deficit was \$3,179,702
- CDOT share was \$1,131,096
- Local funding was \$536,493
- Federal contribution was \$1,458,002

You Can't Work If You Can't Get There

The Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP) of the 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 the Connecticut's Job Access Program. This bus service connects people to job centers. In FY 2010 funding was

- CDOT bus operations \$3,547,280
- FTA grants \$1,790,199
- DSS was \$3,321,613

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. Reduction in funding for TEIP can affect the public by the loss of evening service, Sunday morning or evening services and weekend service which again impact jobs and the economy.

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

A 2007 Connecticut State Long-Term Care Needs Assessment Survey identified transportation as the number one gap cited by providers and the number one missing service identified by Connecticut residents.

In FY 2010, the state matching grant program to municipalities (CSG 13b-38bb. Fund allocation is based on state statutes. 50% based on elderly population/50% on town square mileage) continued to provide expanded demand responsive transportation services for the elderly and people with disabilities in 136 Connecticut towns with a total of \$3,898,285 in grants. 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.

ADA Para-Transit Program

The ADA mandates para-transit services be available to qualified persons on a reservation basis, during the same hours of operation and serving the same geographical area (within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile) of a fixed bus route service. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a federal civil rights legislation 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 para-transit services.

The State appropriation to the ADA Para-Transit Program provides the majority of funding for the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandated services. In FY 2010, Connecticut residents used ADA Para-Transit services for 795,399 trips.

- Operating deficit was \$25,307,842
- CDOT share was \$24,530,068
- Local funding was \$777,735
- There was no federal contribution

CDOT funds 100% of the operational deficit of the transit districts and private carriers who provide ADA mandated services to the fixed route services of state-owned CTTRANSIT. The operation deficit for ADA mandated services to transit district-owned fixed route service is not fully funded by CDOT. Consequently in FY2010 seven transit districts (FY 2009 six transit districts utilized local funds):

- Norwalk Transit District
- Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority
- Housatonic Area Regional Transit
- Middletown Transit District
- Milford Transit District
- Windham Transit District

were required to use a total of \$777,735 in local funds to offset their deficit.

Non-ADA-Dial-A-Ride

This service provided demand responsive services to the elderly and persons with disabilities. In FY 2010, the Connecticut General Assembly appropriated \$576,361 to the Non-ADA-Dial-A-Ride budget line to fund the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT) share to Greater Hartford Transit District, Greater New Haven Transit District, Middletown Transit District, Milford Transit District. The state matching grants to municipality's program CGS 13b-38bb is utilized by transit districts to provide increased demand responsive transportation service in many of the towns transit districts serve. For FY 2010 CDOT provided funds in excess of \$5 million to subsidize the Non-ADA-Dial-A-Ride Program.

Smart Growth, Livable Communities and a Green Economy

Smart growth, transit oriented design, livable communities, are just some of the terms making headlines today and public bus transportation is one of the components that provides residents with the ability to go to work, shop, access medical care, enjoy entertainment and dining in a convenient, affordable manner.

Greater New Haven Transit District (GNHTD) received a hydrogen fuel vehicle and is in the process of developing a Hydrogen Fuel Fuelling Station. www.gnhtd.org

Greater Bridgeport Transit is in the process of retrofitting over 70% of their buses with a clean technology filtration system that is EPA approved. This change will reduce particle matter (90%), hydro carbons (85%) and carbon monoxide (85%). www.gogbt.com

Greater Hartford Transit District has a page on their website listing various options for “going green”. www.hartfordtransit.org

CT Transit completed the CT Transit New Haven Division’s operating and maintenance center which is an environmentally friendly 285,000 square foot facility replacing a 62 year old garage. www.cttransit.com

CT Transit took delivery of four more next generation fuel cell buses making Hartford a leader in using fuel cell technology for their transit.

Financing Connecticut’s Transportation System

The Special Transportation Fund (STF) was established in 1983 (after the Mianus River Bridge collapse on I-95) to invest in the State’s transportation system (excluding Bradley Airport) and the operating costs of the Department of Transportation. These dedicated funds are generated from permits and fees; motor vehicle receipts, interest income, motor vehicle fuel tax, petroleum products tax, licenses, and DMV sales taxes; transfers from the State General Fund; and federal grants. A Transportation Strategy Board analysis of the transportation needs over the next 20 years identified a need for significant funding, \$16 billion in new capital and \$7 billion in the next decade for new capital.

The primary source of revenue for the STF is the Motors Fuel Tax which includes diesel (except for home heating purposes), gasohol, gasoline and other combustible gas or liquid. According to the Transportation Strategy Board, each cent of the gas tax generates approximately \$15million in revenue. Recent analysis indicates that while the motor fuel tax receipts have grown they remain lower than in 2005.

The revenue generated from the Motor Fuel Tax is estimated to \$489,700,000 in FY 2011. (OFA) In FY 2010, the budgeted revenue was \$494,700.00, but the realized revenue was \$503,635,414 an increase of \$1,935,414. (Office of State Comptroller)

For FY 2011 the State Transportation Fund is “expected to end the current fiscal year with a small surplus, but faces challenges in the future.”⁴ But by FY 2012 it will be in a deficit due to expenditures increasing faster than revenues according to the Office of Fiscal Analysis’s FY 2010-2014 General Fund & Transportation Fund Budget Projections.

The FY 2010 estimated expenditure for the Special Transportation Fund is \$1,113,800. Debt service is projected to be 38.4% of the expenditures, while public transportation expenditures are projected at 23.1%.

The 2007 Bus Transit Needs Analysis identifies the need for new and expanded bus services which will require additional investment in operating expenses beyond those currently funded by the State Transportation Fund. An additional \$12.7 million would be needed for operating expenses and \$43.1 million for capital expenses.

The Need for a 21st Century Approach to Funding Transportation Revenue

“The combined bus and metro public transit system which connects Washington, D.C. to communities across a multicity region also has high ridership rates. The area is bike friendly, and transit-oriented development has spawned neighborhood shopping hubs around many metro stations. These factors, in addition to wide sidewalks and a compact size, contribute to the nation’s capital’s ranking among the top five cities for cycling and walkability.”³

Governor Malloy stated “We can create a 21st century transportation system” during his February 16, 2011 budget address to the General Assembly. US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood stated “President Obama made clear in his State of the Nation address, we must win the future by investing in a modern transportation network that will enable us to out-compete the rest of the world.”

Other areas of the country have made significant financial commitments for better transit services including Portland, OR; San Francisco, CA; New York, NY; and Chicago, IL. Despite these tough economic times, good public transportation is cost effective because it will ease the economic and environmental costs of congestion and provide mobility options to residents and employees.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

On February 17, 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was signed into law in an effort to rebuild the transportation infrastructure (notice the signs on our highways), create jobs and provide an infusion of cash to jumpstart the economy following the devastating effects of the recession. ARRA funds are for capital projects only, with the exception of preventative maintenance. Projects need to be identified in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)/Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The transit projects are the:

- Statewide Bus Replacement Procurement Program
- Norwalk Transit District Pulse Point safety & Security Improvements
- Windham Transit District Bus Storage Canopies
- Statewide Park and Ride Lot Improvements and the,
- Bus Engine Repowering-Greater Bridgeport Transit

The total funding is \$152,797,641. Connecticut also received \$302 million in Surface Transportation (STP) fund for shovel ready projects.

Reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Act

SAFETEA-LU's (*Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users*) last bill authorization expired in September 2009 and continues to be reauthorized under short term extensions. During President Obama's Budget Speech on February 16, 2011 he outlined his plan for the public transportation programs which include for FY 2012 a \$22.4 billion request for public transportation programs. The plan also calls for a new six year FY 2012-2017 authorization bill that would increase the investment for surface transportation programs, requesting an expenditure of \$556 billion over the six years for transit, rail and highway programs. This represents a 128 % increase over SAFETEA-LU levels. (APTA).

The Riders



"I love the system, I love it. I use the bus to go to work and everything I need to do because I'm a senior and I don't have a car."



"We are very blessed and very grateful that there is a public transportation system because without it, what would I do because I don't drive?"



"I take it to work, I take it to pick up my niece at the mall, I take it shopping, and I take it to everywhere I need to go."



Daniel Weddle lives in Fairfield and works at Trader Joes, also in Fairfield. He typically works a six hour shift, four days per week. He takes two buses to get to his job and has been doing so for five and a half years. When asked if he enjoys his work, Daniel responded enthusiastically, "yes! I especially enjoy the people I work with." When asked what the bus means to Daniel, he responded, "I don't drive. Without the bus there would be no way for me to get to work, so I would not be able to have a job." Daniel also expressed appreciation for the frequency of bus service on the Coastal Link, one of the routes he relies on to reach work.



"I use the bus to get back and forth to work and to go shopping. I use the bus for everything!"



"The bus is my main transportation."



“Having access to public transportation has helped increase my quality of life. Public transportation has made it possible to accomplish daily tasks such as getting to and from appointments, looking for a job, and other activities that would otherwise be impossible. If it wasn’t for public transportation I would have to rely on my family as my primary source of transportation. Since I have started using public transportation, I’ve discovered a newfound independence that I would have never achieved. I believe that public transportation is not only essential in my life, but also in the lives of many others. Increasing funding and more access to public transportation would help increase the standard of life for countless individuals including myself.” Michelle Bernier

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