

**CONNECTING CONNECTICUT:
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Prepared by
Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT)
February 24, 2010

Imagine what would happen if all the countries on earth ever achieve the same vehicle-ownership rate as the U.S. in 2000: there would be 4.7 billion vehicles even if the human population does not increase.

---Dr. Donald Shoup- The High Cost of Parking (2005)

Public bus services are an essential part of Connecticut’s 21st Century multi-modal transportation system, economic strength, and quality of life. Bus services in Connecticut

- provide affordable transportation to work, educational institutions, health care, marketplaces, entertainment, recreation, social and civic gatherings, and an array of community services;
- reduce congestion, fuel consumption, and carbon footprint; and,
- support smart development, livable communities, and a green economy.



Every day Connecticut residents demonstrate that riding the public bus to work and to other destinations makes sense for their pocketbook, the air they breathe, and the state’s economy. The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) estimates that \$ 9,242 is the average annual savings for a person riding public transportation instead of driving. On average, a transit rider can save \$770 per month.

Reducing Congestion, Fuel Consumption, and Carbon Footprint in Connecticut

Public transportation in 2007 saved road travelers in Connecticut’s three urban areas a total of 1.06 million hours of additional delay and \$21.6 million in additional costs. The 2009 Urban Mobility Report by the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University studied 2007 congestion data in metropolitan areas across the nation.

Hours of delay for road travelers in the Bridgeport-Stamford areas are increasing at a faster rate than similar sized metropolitan areas according to the report. The report findings for the three urban areas in Connecticut are listed in the table below.

2007 Components of the Congestion Problem (2009 Urban Mobility Report)			
<u>Urban Area</u>	<u>Hours of Delay</u>	<u>Excess Fuel Consumed</u>	<u>Congestion Cost</u>
Bridgeport-Stamford	16,077,000	12,760,000	\$350,000,000
Hartford	10,147,000	7,201,000	\$203,000,000
New Haven	5,728,000	4,223,000	\$117,000,000
TOTAL	31,952,000	24,184,000	\$670,000,000

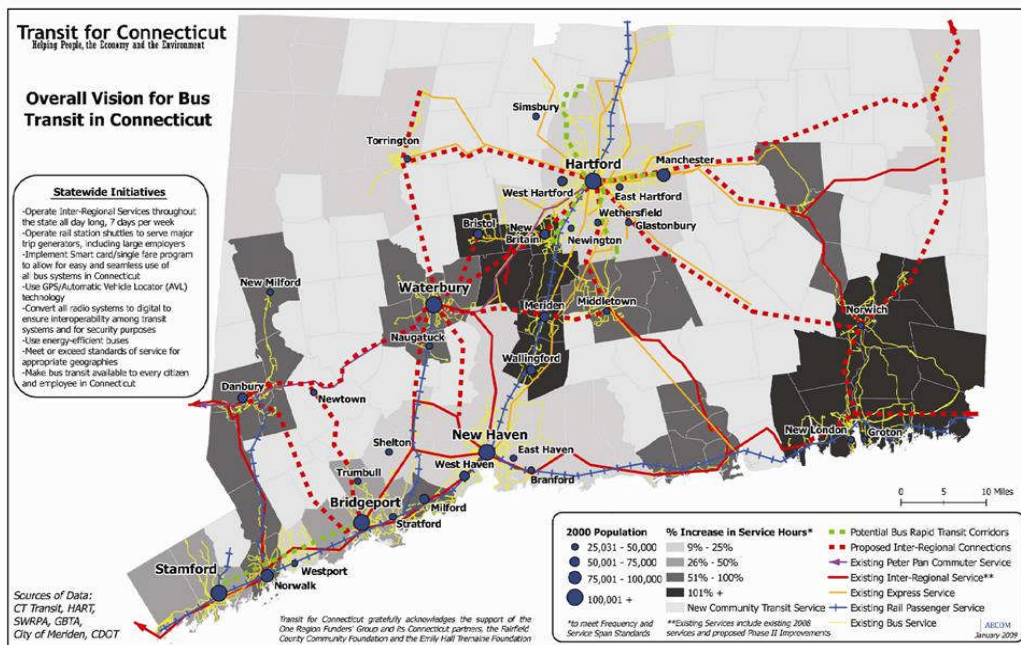
When the bus is the ride of choice instead of driving alone for a 20 mile round trip commute to the workplace, the transit rider reduces 4800 pounds of CO₂ emissions per year (APTA).



William Strain understands the economic and environmental impact of driving. He had an easy three mile commute to his accounting position at Aetna’s Middletown offices. But when Aetna relocated its Middletown employees to Hartford, and gas prices continued to climb, Strain decided to park his car and try the bus.

He rides the 6-Cromwell Express every day, makes use of the money he saves with a gas fill up that now occurs only once every three weeks, and enjoys saving the wear on his car and his nerves. Impressed by the hydrogen fuel cell and hybrid electric buses, Strain would like to see more of these vehicles on the streets of Hartford to help the environment.

Despite the economic and environmental benefits of increased ridership on public transportation for residents and the State of Connecticut, 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. The map below illustrates the increase in service hours to meet Frequency and Service Span Standards, new community transit service, new inter-regional connections, and existing service* that would make bus transit available to every citizen and employee, and reduce the number of single occupant vehicles traveling on Connecticut roads.



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.

*Existing services illustrated in the map include \$ 3 million in operating funds provided by the Governor's Initiative and services planned but not implemented in FY 2009 because the funds were cut.

Providing affordable transportation to work, educational institutions, health care, marketplaces and other destinations

FY 2009-Connecticut Investment in Public Bus Services



70 Connecticut towns had no or limited public bus service available in FY 2009. In the towns and cities that do have public bus services, their availability is determined by a resident's access to a bus stop that is within walking distance. Nearly 60% of transit trips start when the bus rider reaches his or her transit vehicle by walking (APTA Fact Book 2009).

Connecticut residents and travelers in FY 2009 made almost 38.2 million trips on public bus service (Urban, Rural, Non ADA Dial-A-Ride, and ADA Para-transit Service). The cost to the State in SFY 2009 was \$3.53 per ride.

The operating deficit (expense minus farebox receipts/other revenue) for providing the bus services was \$141,043,312; the Connecticut Department of Transportation share was \$134,945,494. The Connecticut General Assembly appropriated a total of \$139,665,185 for three biennial budget line items in the Department of Transportation (CDOT) operating budget for FY 2009: Bus Operations, ADA Paratransit Program, and Non-ADA Dial-A-Ride.

Bus Operations

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-response services (non-ADA), rural transit services, commuter express and shuttle bus services. In FY 2009, the public chose these bus services for 37,357,746 trips.

Urban public bus services provided 35,324,508 trips in FY 2009. The operating deficit was \$105,180,791; the CDOT share was \$102,494,863; local funding was \$2,556,765; and federal contribution was \$75,498.

The public chose *rural transit services* for 377,926 trips in FY 2009. The Connecticut Department of Transportation funds 33% of the operational deficit for rural transit services and requires a 17% investment of local funds to provide the mandated 50% match to the federal contribution. The operating deficit was \$2,886,224; the CDOT share was \$1,032,579; local funding was \$441,229; and the federal contribution was \$1,412,416.

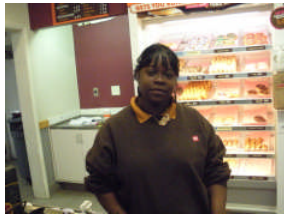
The Governor's Midterm Budget Adjustment recommendation for Bus Operations in FY 2011 maintains the funds as originally appropriated by the Connecticut General Assembly. But if the Governor's recommendation to suspend funding to the Department of Social Service for the Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP) succeeds, the FY 2011 appropriation for Bus Operations will be insufficient to maintain on the street services funded by the Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP).

Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP): You Can't Work If You Can't Get There

The Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP) of the Department of Social Services (DSS) funds 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, providing bus service that connects people to job centers.

In FY 2009, the Department Of Transportation's portion of the program was about \$6.7 million: \$3.1 million came from the CDOT Bus Operations budget; \$2.1 million from FTA grants; and about \$1.5 million from the Department of Social Services. Using an array of transit options job seekers and workers are able to reach workplaces and daycare previously inaccessible due to geographical limits or the limited hours of service of pre-existing public transportation.

The Governor's 2010-2011 Midterm Budget Adjustment recommends suspending TEIP funding. The impact of this action in FY 2011 will likely mean sizeable service cuts to many on-street transit services used by the public; and, full service cuts in FY 2012. Examples of bus service affected by the loss of TEIP funds includes CTTRANSIT Saturday night service, Sunday morning service, and Sunday evening service in Hartford, all CTTRANSIT services in New Britain that run during the hours of 6 p.m. to midnight, and the base level of service on the Coastal Link (transit districts in Norwalk and Bridgeport receive DSS money to subsidize that service). The Coastal Link provides commuters a seamless and affordable bus ride from Milford to Norwalk and reduces congestion on I-95.



Anita Davis moved up north from South Carolina because of better job opportunities and better access to them with public transit. A Bridgeport resident for only the past year, Anita lives in the East Side of Bridgeport and takes Greater Bridgeport Transit 4 days per week to go to work in the West End of Bridgeport. She also takes the bus one day a week to attend classes to become a Certified Nurse's Assistant.

According to Anita, "Without the bus, I don't know how I would manage to do all the things I have to do – go to work, grocery shopping, school. The opportunities down south are a lot less than they are here for someone like me because the transit system is so sparse. Here in Bridgeport, the bus is my lifeline to me being able to move ahead in life."

CACT urges the Connecticut General Assembly to restore FY 2011 funding (\$3,155,532) to the TEIP in the Department of Social Services' budget to enable Connecticut's residents to access jobs and contribute to the economy of the state.

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



Oakville resident Rose Theriault doesn't drive, but age and a disability have not left her homebound thanks to the demand responsive transportation she uses to take her to her doctor, grocery shopping, and to visit her 103-year old mother. "Having access to the dial-a-ride and ADA paratransit services provided by North East Transportation Co. keeps me active and helps me participate in a normal healthy lifestyle," said Theriault. The Greater Waterbury Transit District offers a regional solution for the 8 towns in its district and contracts with North East Transportation Co. to provide the demand responsive transportation that is funded by the state matching grants to the municipalities.

In FY 2009, the state matching grant program to municipalities (CGS 13b-38bb) provided expanded demand responsive transportation services for the elderly and people with disabilities in 136 towns with a total of \$3.9 million in grants; an additional 8 towns had applications pending. In addition to providing transportation solutions for towns and their eligible residents, the state matching grants have also contributed to:

- jobs that family members are able to keep because their loved ones are safely transported to their destinations:

- access to medical care that keeps people healthy longer and living independently for greater cost savings to the state;
- the economy by providing seniors and people with disabilities access to the marketplace to spend their money on goods and services; and,
- quality of life enjoyed by seniors and people with disabilities.

The state matching grant program to municipalities for demand responsive transportation for elders (60+) and persons with disabilities (CGS 13b-38bb) allocates funds to towns based on a formula (50% based on town elderly population/50% based on town square mileage). The 1999 program was first funded by PA 05-4, providing \$5 million in each year of the biennium. The funds remain until expended.

The FY 2011 appropriation to Bus Operations includes \$5 million for the state matching grant program. Addressing the mobility needs of Connecticut’s growing population of residents who are elderly or have disabilities not only makes sense but also results in dollars saved for the state. Transportation is the number one gap in service cited by providers and the number one missing service identified by Connecticut residents in the 2007 State Long-Term Care Needs Assessment Survey.

ADA Para-Transit Program

Connecticut residents who have a disability that impairs their ability to use the accessible and affordable fixed route public bus service may rely for their mobility needs on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), federal civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination. 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 ¾ mile) of a fixed route bus service.



Kiki Dixon is a resident of Vernon-Rockville and a customer of the Greater Hartford Transit District; the provider of ADA paratransit services to CTTRANSIT fixed route service. The ADA paratransit service that once took Dixon to a part-time job in Windsor, now takes her to Manchester Community College where she is student. As a single parent, she relies on the transportation to reach the medical care she and her daughter need. “Without these bus services it would be difficult for me to get the education I need for employment in my chosen the field and to take care of my daughter’s and my health,” stated Dixon.

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 2009, Connecticut residents used ADA Para-Transit services for 849,119 trips. The State appropriation was \$23,020,606. The operational deficit was \$24,312,548: the CDOT share was \$ 23,316, 621; local share was \$ 749,211 and the Federal contribution was \$246,716.

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 the state-owned CTTRANSIT. The operational deficit for ADA mandated services to transit district-owned fixed route service is not fully funded by CDOT. Consequently, in FY 2009 six transit districts were required to use a total of \$ 749,211 in local funds to offset their deficit. Please see the table below.

CDOT Share Equals ADA Operational Deficit	CDOT Share Less Than ADA Operational Deficit
Greater Harford Transit District; Greater New Haven Transit District; Central CT RPA-DATTCO; North East Transportation; Norwalk Transit District-Stamford; Valley Transit District	Greater Bridgeport Transit; Housatonic Area Regional Transit; Middletown Transit District; Norwalk Transit District (Norwalk & Westport); Southeast Area Transit; Windham Region Transit District

Non-ADA Dial-A-Ride

In FY 2009, 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 the transit districts of Greater Hartford, Greater New Haven, Middletown and Milford to provide demand responsive transportation services to the elderly and persons with disabilities. The operating deficit was \$813,466; the local share was \$237,105.

The first appropriation to a Dial-A-Ride (DAR) line item was made in FY 1999 to offset the loss of federal operating funds (Section 5307) used by five transit districts 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 two separate budget line items: the ADA Para Transit Program; and the Non-ADA Dial-Ride Program.

The state's growing percentage of residents who have a disability or are 65 years or older increases the demand for Non-ADA Dial-A-Ride every year; transit districts provided 37,015 rides in FY 2009. The FY 2011 appropriation to Non-ADA Dial Program remains at \$576, 361. The transit districts rely on the state matching grants to municipalities program (CGS 13b-38bb) to provide increased demand responsive transportation service in many of the towns these transit districts serve.

Supporting Smart Development, Livable Communities and a Green Economy

Amanda Kennedy is an associate planner at the Connecticut RPA in Stamford and a bus rider. Excerpts from her November 2009 RPA article "Buses for a Green City" are included here with her permission.

"If Stamford is truly to become a green city, it needs to go beyond sidewalks, bike lanes and the limited transit coverage provided by rail and light rail. Stamford is a suburban city, consisting of commercial and mixed-use corridors connecting small village centers surrounded by single family homes. Many households are several miles away from any of Stamford's three train stations. Buses are the only realistic way to reach most Stamford residents, but carbon neutrality seems out of reach unless we can find a way to boost bus ridership."

"The US Department of Transportation recently announced that the State of Connecticut would receive \$7 million in stimulus funding to upgrade new buses already on order from standard diesel buses to hybrid diesel/electric and fuel cell vehicles. New, clean vehicles are a big step towards improving the riders' experience, but it's time to make upgrading urban and suburban bus systems a real priority. Technology exists and has been implemented in many communities to create a network of clean and efficient bus routes that compare with rail systems in their comfort, frequency and accessibility, but have greater reach than rail and can service lower density neighborhoods. In my commuting fantasy, I would time leaving the office to real-time bus scheduling information, meeting the bus just as it pulls into a well-lit, covered stop. As more people became bus riders, more frequent service and additional bus hubs outside downtown would become viable. A bus system cannot succeed if it is an option of last resort; it needs to be of high enough quality that people seek it out."

Greater Bridgeport Transit (GBT) will begin using a web-based system in April 2010 to provide bus arrival and departure information. Web Watch will bring *GBT* bus information to the desktops and fingertips of bus riders and travelers.

Greater New Haven Transit District (GNHTD) is engaged in a unique system demonstration program to prove the validity and commercial viability of an environmentally friendly hydrogen fuel transit bus.

The program is unique, as it fully integrates the development and implementation of the systems required for use of hydrogen powered vehicles used in public transit service, rather than just the vehicles themselves, according to Steven Castaneda of JAI.

The fueling station and vehicle are scheduled to debut in September 2010. The HyRide project is part of the FTA Research and Development program for the development of hydrogen vehicles.

CTTRANSIT, currently operating a single, 40' hydrogen fuel cell-powered bus in the greater Hartford region—a project of the FTA Research and Development program for the development of hydrogen vehicles, is in the process of procuring four more fuel cell buses due for delivery in early 2010.

Connecticut Department of Transportation decision to include design provisions for stationary fuel cell power in new major facilities, including new transit maintenance facilities, is further evidence of its commitment to green transportation.

The Special Transportation Fund: Financing Connecticut's Transportation System

Since 1984 the Special Transportation Fund (STF) has functioned as a dedicated fund for the financing of investment of the State's transportation system (excluding Bradley Airport) and the operating costs of the Department of Transportation and the services it provides. The State Transportation Fund (STF) revenues are generated from: licenses, permits and fees; motor vehicles receipts; interest income; motor fuels tax; petroleum products tax; and sales taxes-DMV; transfer from General Fund; and federal grants.

The Motors Fuel Tax is the primary source of revenue for the STF. *Fuel* includes gasoline, diesel, gasohol, and other combustible gas or liquid. From January 1, 1997, the gas tax has reduced from 39 cents per gallon to 25 cents per gallon on July 1, 2000. Each cent of the gas tax generates approximately \$15 million in revenue (Transportation Strategy Board).

In FY 2011, the Motor Fuel Tax is estimated to generate about \$489.7 million—40.3% of the STF revenues (Governor's budget projection). In FY 2009 the realized revenue from the Motor Fuels Tax was \$495,024,644—a loss of \$28,575,356 in the revenue budgeted according to the STF Statement of Estimated and Realized Revenue for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2009 (Office of State Comptroller).

In FY 2011 the STF operating balance is projected to be \$14 million, but by FY 2012 it will be in deficit because estimated expenditures will continue to increase faster than estimated revenues according to the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) FY 10-FY 14 General Fund & Transportation Fund Budget Projections. The cumulative balance is projected to reduce from \$120.9 million in FY 2011 to \$82.2 million in FY 2012.

The Governor's budget projects FY 2011 expenditures from the Special Transportation Fund to total \$1,182.1 million. Debt service is projected to be 38.4% of the expenditures, while public transportation expenditures are projected at 23.1%.

New and expanded bus services as identified by the 2007 Bus Transit Needs Analysis require additional investment in operating expenses beyond those currently funded by the STF. If phased in over five years, in each year an additional investment of \$12.7 million is needed for operating expenses, and an annual investment of \$43 million for capital expenses.

Increasing the transportation options for Connecticut residents and funding a 21st Century multi-modal transportation system are imperative to the state's economy, quality of life, environment and healthy communities. Connecticut must be able to generate the revenue needed.

Connecticut's 21st Century Transportation Systems Needs 21st Century Revenue

At the beginning of the 21st Century as congestion on the State's highways reached gridlock and threatened the State's economy, Connecticut reduced the gas tax back to its 1992 level - 25 cents per gallon-. In 2008, amid escalating gas prices and growing transit use, Connecticut eliminated a .05% rate increase in the Petroleum Company Gross Earnings Tax.

Unlike Connecticut, economic uncertainty during November 2009 did not stop citizens in communities in Colorado, Michigan, and Maine from voting to tax themselves for better public transit services, and it did not stop the voters in Cincinnati, OH from defeating a measure that would have limited their transit authority's ability to expand public transportation. Connecticut needs to be equally courageous in the face of current economic challenges to generate the revenue to fund a 21st Century multi-modal transportation system. Existing generating revenue sources for transportation can be expanded and new ones added such as:

- Raising Connecticut's gas tax and index any future increases to inflation. Connecticut's gas tax can generate more revenue for the Special Transportation Fund but as gas consumption declines so do the funds needed for the 21st Century public transportation alternatives to single-occupant vehicles, and maintain existing roads and bridges. (1 cent generates \$15,000,000)
- Restoring the scheduled Petroleum Gross Earnings Tax Rate Increase.
- Using the Petroleum Gross Receipt Tax primarily for the Special Transportation Fund. Increase the Special Transportation Fund portion of the Petroleum Gross Receipts Tax over the next 6 years so that by 2017 the Petroleum Gross Receipt Tax revenue is used primarily for transportation.
- Congestion pricing on Connecticut roads and highways.

Prioritize the expenditures to give residents a 21st Century balanced transportation system and the State economic strength and competitiveness. The economy will recover and investments in public transportation will ease the economic and environmental costs of congestion in Connecticut and provide mobility options to residents and employees.

Increase Federal Investment for a Balanced and Multi-Modal Transportation System

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was signed into law February 17, 2009 to create jobs, rebuild the transportation infrastructure, encourage the flow of money into the economy, and provide money to cash strapped states. Connecticut was estimated to receive about \$137 million for public transportation projects, including funding for Amtrak. The funding is allocated using the federal formula enacted as part of the SAFETEA-LU authorization and provides 100% federal funding (except for New Starts).

The ARRA funds are for capital projects only, with the exception of preventative maintenance. Projects must be in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)/Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Five transit projects and four rail projects totaling \$152,797,641 were funded. The transit projects are: Statewide Bus Replacement Procurement Program; Norwalk Transit District Pulse Point Safety and Security Improvements; Windham Transit District Bus Storage Canopies; Statewide Park and Ride Lot Improvements (13 lots); and Bus Engine Repowering-Greater Bridgeport Transit.

In addition, Connecticut received over \$302 million in Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for shovel-ready projects. Nearly 30% of the STP funds were sub allocated to decision makers in large urbanized areas with populations over 200,000.

Jobs Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a jobs bill in December 2009 that provided short-term funding for roads, bridges and transit systems, including a provision to allow large transit systems to use 10% of the \$6.15 billion in formula funding for operations. “The Senate’s first jobs bill contains no transportation funding other than a transfer of general fund dollars to cover the looming gap in the Highway Trust Fund while extending the transportation bill (SAFETEA-LU) until the end of the year,” according to Transportation for America, a broad based national coalition.

Transportation for America’s proposal to Congress directs \$34.3 billion toward a mix of public transportation, highways and bicycle and pedestrian projects. The proposal contains roughly \$16 billion for transit, \$8.1 billion for the Surface Transportation Program (highways), \$9.8 billion for competitive grants (like the TIGER grants announced today) and \$1.5 billion for Active Transportation such as bike and pedestrian facilities to make walking and biking safer and more attractive.

Reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Act

SAFETEA-LU, the surface transportation authorization act that expired September 30, 2009 has been extended three times; the current extension expires February 28, 2010. The Senate *jobs bill* called up on Monday, February 22, 2010 is expected to extend SAFETEA-LU until the end of year while providing for a transfer of general fund dollars to the Highway Trust Fund.

The reauthorization of surface transportation legislation’s investment in public transportation should at least provide the capacity and availability to enable public transportation ridership to more than double in the next 20 years to over 20 billion trips annually. To accommodate a doubling of public transportation ridership over the next twenty-year period to address national goals and policies that promote energy independence, improve air quality, address climate change, and provide mobility choices, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) recommends a minimum federal public transportation investment level of \$123 billion over the six-year authorization period. The six-year funding would create, support or sustain over 4.4 million new jobs.

Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) wishes to acknowledge the funding provided by Connect-Ability, a federally funded project bringing together employers and people with disabilities, managed by Connecticut Department of Social Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. This publication does not express the views of the Department or the State of Connecticut. The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors.