

**THE STATE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN CONNECTICUT:
MOVING FROM THE PAST, SERVING THE PRESENT,
PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE**

Prepared by
Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT)
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What we do in the next 10 years to reshape our transportation infrastructure will benefit our economy immediately by providing more jobs; and ensure economic prosperity, as well as a healthy and safe environment, for decades to come

--- APTA-Changing the Way America Moves

In good economic times and in challenging ones, 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 mobility 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 in growing numbers 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. It is no surprise that bus ridership is up in the state and expanded service is being called for by the public and businesses alike.



Adil Chouqui, a Walgreens Distributions Center team member, has been using CTTRANSIT Route 34 since he began working at the Windsor site in mid-December of 2008. Adil credits CTTRANSIT with allowing him to save money on gas as well as wear and tear on his car. In today’s economy, he says that it has been helpful to use the money he saves in other necessary areas. He also commented, with a grin, “Plus it helps me get to work on time.”

The American Association for Public Transportation (APTA) estimates that \$8481 is the average annual savings for a person riding public transportation instead of driving. Chouqui, a Hartford resident, knows he saves money when he rides the bus but he may be less aware that he also saves 4600 pounds of CO2 emissions per year for a 20 mile round-trip commute to his workplace.

By using public transportation, Adil Chouqui not only saves his hours delayed in traffic and the gallons of gas he would spend due to the congestion, but he also saves time and money for Hartford area travelers, according to the 2007 Urban Mobility Report. In total, public transportation saved travelers in Connecticut’s three urban areas 1.1 million hours of additional delay and an additional cost of \$20.6 million. The 2007 Urban Mobility Report by the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University studied 2005 congestion data for the three urban areas in Connecticut. The report findings are listed in the table below.

| 2005 Components of the Congestion Problem (2007 Urban Mobility Report) | | | |
|---|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <u>Urban Area</u> | <u>Hours of Delay</u> | <u>Excess Fuel Consumed</u> | <u>Congestion Cost</u> |
| Bridgeport-Stamford | 14,510,000 | 11,500,000 | \$280,000,000 |
| Hartford | 9,252,000 | 6,526,000 | \$166,000,000 |
| New Haven | 5,706,000 | 4,227,000 | \$104,000,000 |
| TOTAL | 29.468,000 | 22,353,000 | \$550,000,000 |

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 compared to the amount of need identified in the 2007 Bus

Service Needs Analysis conducted by Urbitran Associates for Transit for Connecticut. The effect of inadequate investment on bus ridership is explained by Urbitran, “If an area has a low level of service for the size of the community, it will likely result in low levels of ridership, simply because the system is not large enough for the area, doesn’t get close enough to residents houses or doesn’t serve enough places or hours or the day.”

To close the service gap identified by the 2007 Bus Needs Analysis, 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 an additional \$5 million for FY 2009 operations for enhanced, expanded, and new bus services, but cut the funds in the budget deficit mitigation legislation it passed on November 24, 2008.

FY 2008-Connecticut Investment in Public Bus Services

Public transportation is not available to all residents in Connecticut. In FY 2008, nearly 70 Connecticut towns had no or limited service. In the Connecticut towns and cities that do have public bus services, availability is determined by a resident’s access to a bus stop that is within walking distance (approximately ¼ mile).

Connecticut residents and visitors in FY 2008 made almost 37.1 million trips on public bus service (Urban, Rural, Non ADA Dial-A-Ride, ADA Para-transit Service). The cost to the State in SFY 2008 was \$3.30 per ride.

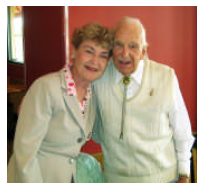


The vehicle of choice for Sylvia Roque of Bridgeport is a fixed route bus. Ms. Roque said, “I feel most in sync with my adopted hometown when I ride the bus.” Sylvia Roque, a rider since 1998 when she did a reverse daily commute to and from New Haven, uses the bus throughout the week to transport her to many destinations. “I avoid driving whenever possible,” Roque stated. “Without the bus I would lose much of my independence. I would probably not volunteer, since I would have to rely on rides from friends and family; and, I’d forget about a seasonal job like tax preparation if I needed to drive in winter conditions,” said Ms. Roque.

The operating deficit (expense minus farebox receipts/other revenue) for providing these bus services was \$127,916,214; the Connecticut Department of Transportation share was \$122,677,506. A total of \$131,259,121 was appropriated in FY 2008 by the General Assembly for three biennial budget line items in the Department of Transportation (CDOT) operating budget: Bus Operations, ADA Paratransit Program, and Non-ADA Dial-A-Ride.

Bus Operations

The Bus Operations budget line item funds the CDOT share of the operating deficit for urban fixed route services, demand-response services (Waterbury and Valley Transit District), rural transit services, commuter express and shuttle bus services. In FY 2008, the public chose these bus services for 36,328,530 trips.



At 101 years of age, Milford resident Jesse James Hamblin, Sr. shows few signs of slowing down. A frequent rider of New Haven’s J-Milford route, Jesse Hamblin uses the bus and an occasional ride from family and friends to go about his daily activities. Pictured with Jesse is Denise Sabal, a fellow bus rider and friend from West Haven who uses the J-route to connect to the Milford Train Station for her twice-a-week

commute to New York City.

Not one for staying at home, Hamblin started riding the bus regularly when he turned 91. He suffers from macular degeneration and can no longer drive. The bus stop is close enough for him to walk to it. On the days when the weather is bad, his son will drive him to the mall so he can meet his friends for morning coffee and a daily chat.

Jesse Hamblin's life is nothing short of impressive. He is an architect and has built everything from schools to churches to malls. He designed the first Connecticut Post Mall in Milford.

Urban public bus services provided 35,965,029 rides in FY 2008. The operating deficit was \$103,296,996: the CDOT share was \$101,396,336; and local funding was \$1,408,363.

The public used fixed route and non-ADA demand responsive *rural transit services* for 360,498 rides in FY 2008. The Connecticut Department of Transportation funds 33% of the operational deficit for rural transit services, requiring a 17% match in local funding to provide the 50% match for the federal contribution. The operating deficit was \$2,703,475: the CDOT share was \$940,457; local funding was \$413,975; and the federal contribution was \$1,349,043.

The Governor's 2010-2011 Biennial Budget recommendation for Bus Operations maintains urban and rural current services, but it does not include funds for the State Matching Grants Program.

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

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. Every year, a growing percentage of Connecticut's 1 million baby-boomers (almost 1/3 of the population) and people with disabilities increase the demand for transportation options.



Timothy Cooper relies heavily on the Suffield Mini Bus to transport him to and from Allied Rehabilitation Center, located in Enfield. Mr. Cooper has many special needs which the drivers attend to with the utmost of care according to his mother, Carolyn Davis. "This wonderful service has allowed me the freedom and flexibility to continue with our daily employment schedules and other routines that would otherwise have to be adjusted to fit the program schedule," stated Ms. Davis. "I would not be able to work if it were not for the Suffield Mini Bus and its

dedicated staff."

In FY 2008, 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. Many regional transportation solutions have been created as a result of the grants. But this program is about more than the mobility and independence of seniors and people with disabilities, it is also about:

- 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;
- stimulating 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 program, enacted in 1999, was first funded by PA 05-4, providing \$5 million in each year of the biennium. The funds remain until expended.

The Governor's 2010-2011 Biennial Budget recommendation for the CDOT Bus Operations does not include funding for the state matching grant program even though Connecticut's demographic trends indicate it is critical to addressing the mobility needs of Connecticut residents who are elderly or have disabilities. CACT urges the Connecticut General Assembly to restore funding for the state matching grants to municipalities for demand responsive transportation for the elderly and people with disabilities by carrying forward \$2.2 million in unexpended funds and appropriating the additional \$1.9 million in FY 2010 to the Bus Operations budget.

Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP)

The Transportation Employment Independence Program (TEIP) funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS) is used in a variety of programs and services managed by the five regional job access partnerships in the state. Connecticut's Job Access program totals almost \$8 million annually; the Department of Transportation manages a portion of the program.

In FY 2009, the Department Of Transportation's portion of the program is about \$6.7 million (\$3.1 million comes from the CDOT Bus Operations budget, \$2.1 million from FTA grants, and about \$1.5 million from DSS).

The Governor's 2010-2011 Biennial Budget recommends a 25% reduction in TEIP funding. This reduction will likely have an impact on Coastal Link or other on-street transit services since the DSS funding is the source for the base level of service on Coastal Link (transit districts in Norwalk and Bridgeport receive a total of \$426,620 in 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.

CACT urges the restoration of funds to the Department of Social Services' budget to enable Connecticut's residents to access jobs and contribute to the economy of the state.

ADA Para-Transit Program

Ronald Hargrove, a resident the City of Bridgeport, has been using GBT services for over 25 years. He uses both fixed route and ADA Para transit services to travel to work, visit family and friends and to go to church. "Without bus services it would be difficult for me to get to the places in the community that I need to go," stated Hargrove. "It is hard and too expensive for me to use a taxi cab because of my disability."

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.

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 2008, Connecticut residents used ADA Para-Transit services for 708,549 trips. The State appropriation was \$20,542,932. The operational deficit was \$21,164,716; and, the CDOT share was \$19,785,454.

The CDOT share for ADA mandated services provided to transit district-owned fixed route service did not fully fund the operational deficit in FY 2008. Consequently, these transit districts were required to use a total of \$1,227,204 in local funds to offset the deficit. Whereas, transit districts and private carriers providing ADA mandated services to the fixed route services of the state-owned CTTRANSIT did receive 100% of their operational deficit as the CDOT share. Please see the table below.

| CDOT Share Equals ADA Operational Deficit | CDOT Share Less Than ADA Operational Deficit |
|---|---|
| Greater Hartford 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 2008, 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 \$751,028; and the local share was \$195,768.

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.

Although Connecticut’s demographic trends are increasing the demand for Non-ADA Dial-A-Ride, the State’s appropriation to Non-ADA Dial Program remains the same. In FY 2008, the state matching grants to municipalities program (CGS 13b-38bb) enabled transit districts to increase demand responsive transportation service in many of the towns they serve, and also helped to create regional solutions that serve more towns.

Connecticut’s Economic Future

The State must generate the revenue needed to fund the operating and capital expenditures of a 21st Century multi-modal transportation system capable of moving Connecticut’s economy, reducing congestion and CO2 emissions, creating livable communities and improving the quality of life of Connecticut residents. The State Transportation Fund (STF) provides the majority of funding for Connecticut’s current transportation system with revenues generated from the following sources: licenses, permits and fees; motor vehicles receipts; interest income; gas tax; petroleum products tax; and sales tax-DMV.

In FY 2009, nearly 39% of the estimated expenditures from the State Transportation Fund (STF) are for debt service. In FY 2010, the cumulative balance for the STF is expected to go into deficit, and projections for FY 2010 and the out years for the STF is that it will experience annual operating deficits.

To provide the new and expanded bus services needed to close the gap in service identified by the 2007 Bus Needs Analysis requires an additional investment in operating expenses beyond the current services funded by the STF. Even if phased in over 5 years, the annual additional investment needed for operating expenses is \$12.7 million and \$43 million for capital expenses (investment information by service type is provided by the Urbitran Associates in the following table).

| Service Type | Full Implementation (Annual Operating Expense) | Increase Over 2005 Spending | Capital Investment | Annual Passenger Trips | Increase Over 2005 Passenger Trips |
|--|---|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Additional Funds to Existing Transit Operators | \$48,291,410 | 46% | \$172,617,156 | 24,092,640 | 77% |
| ADA Service Increase | \$3,297,929 | 18% | \$1,875,000 | 125,488 | 18% |
| Expansion –New Service Areas | \$24,091,867 | N/A | \$11,175,000 | 1,873,131 | N/A |
| Express Services | \$3,870,529 | 97% | \$29,769,600 | 1,138,686 | 78% |
| Total | \$79,551,736 | 61% | \$215,436,756 | 27,229,945 | 81% |
| Total Assuming 20% Farebox Return | \$63,641,389 | | \$215,436,756 | 27,229,945 | |

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.

Use the Spectrum of Options Available for Funding Connecticut’s Public Transportation

1. Generate State Revenue that Moves Connecticut’s Transportation System into the 21st Century

Connecticut’s current and future transit systems must be ready to meet 21st Century challenges and our existing roads and bridges must be maintained and repaired. But the Special Transportation Fund (STF) that pays for most of Connecticut’s transportation systems is suffering from declining revenues, increasing expenditures, construction cost escalation, and unknown federal commitments.

Connecticut must seize the opportunity of this economic crisis to use all revenue generating options that give residents a 21st Century balanced transportation system and the State economic strength and competitiveness. Two actions will help:

Expand the funding options

- Use tolling. Do it safely by using modern technology like EZ Pass high speed or cashless tolling (AET). In the New York City region, both the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) use toll revenue to subsidize transit operations.
- Use congestion pricing on Connecticut roads and highways. Try it first on select highways.
- Raise Connecticut’s gas tax and index any future increases to inflation. Connecticut’s gas tax can help to generate more revenue for the Special Transportation Fund but as gas consumption declines so do the funds needed to maintain existing roads and bridges, and to create the affordable 21st Century public transportation alternatives to single-occupant vehicles.
- Use the Petroleum Gross Receipt Tax only for the Special Transportation Fund. Over the next five years if the State of Connecticut were to reduce the portion of the Gross Receipts Tax that goes into the General Fund, by 2015 the Petroleum Gross Receipt Tax revenue could be used solely for transportation.

Provide Accountability for the Revenue Generated

- Prioritize expenditures to create and sustain a balanced transportation system that reduces our carbon emissions, wear and tear on existing roads and bridges as well as our dependence on foreign oil and single occupant vehicles.
- Document the outcomes.

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

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

To create jobs, rebuild the transportation infrastructure, encourage the flow of money into the economy, and provide money to cash strapped states, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was signed into law February 17, 2009. Connecticut is estimated to receive about \$137 million for public transportation projects, including funding for Amtrak. The funding will be allocated using the federal formula enacted as part of the SAFETEA-LU authorization and provide 100% federal funding (except for New Starts). Funds are to be used for capital projects only, with the exception of preventative maintenance. Projects must be in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)/Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

In addition, Connecticut will receive over \$302 million in Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for shovel-ready projects, with nearly 30% of the STP funds sub allocated to decision makers in large urbanized areas with populations over 200,000. State and local officials have an extraordinary opportunity to create jobs and address the unmet needs of pedestrians, transit users, and bicyclists by using these funds wisely. By including pedestrian and bike improvements in road repaving and resurfacing projects, many communities can combine short-term economic stimulus with significant long-term benefit of a livable community that promotes transit use, walking and biking to improve its carbon emissions, health, and economy.

The Connecticut Association for Community Transportation urges Governor M. Jodi Rell to ensure that “shovel ready” projects and transit-supportive pedestrian and bike projects are prioritized to reward those communities that move the state towards a balanced mobility system.

Reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Act

SAFETEA-LU, the current surface transportation authorization act, will expire in September 2009. The reauthorization of surface transportation legislation provides the opportunity for the nation and Connecticut to create a transportation system that is balanced and multi-modal.

Investment in public transportation should 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 next six-year authorization period.

But if America is truly serious about creating a long-term and significant mobility-paradigm shift that “changes the way America moves” by 2030, according to APTA it will take an investment of \$134.2 billion in capital costs and \$102.3 billion in operating costs per year for at least the next 20 years. This investment, to come from a combination of federal, state and local public resources and the private sector,

would be reinvested directly into the U.S. economy. With the generally accepted ratio of an average return of 6:1, such an investment would create millions of American jobs, generate enormous public and private revenue, and make the country more economically and environmentally-efficient. And, it would yield an estimated \$730 billion in increased business sales.

America's journey to a balanced and multi-modal transportation begins with the first step, reauthorization. The first step should be a federal public transportation investment level of at least \$123 billion over the six-year authorization period.

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