



**Testimony of James Harris, Executive Council Member AARP CT
On S.B. 1395 “An Act Concerning Independent Transportation Networks”
Human Services Committee
March 13, 2007**

Chairman Harris, Chairman Villano, and members of the Human Services Committee. I am James Harris, Executive Council Member for AARP CT and I am pleased to voice AARP’s strong support for **S.B. 1395 “An Act Concerning Independent Transportation Networks”**

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization representing the interests of people 50 and older. There are more than 618,000 AARP members in Connecticut. They comprise about 40 percent of all those who vote in the state.

AARP supports the creation of independent transportation networks to offer low cost multi-town rides for older persons and people with disabilities. AARP believes that these self sustaining networks should be created with state planning grants. This bill would provide the needed additional funding for the 5 previously selected municipalities chosen by the Department of Social Services for the development and implementation of community-based regional transportation systems and also allow for 5 additional communities in Connecticut to start-up. AARP was a part of the original research done on this project in Portland, Maine. The Independent Transportation Networks (ITN) Model, provides a highly consumer-oriented service that maximizes free choice and further increases mobility options for seniors and persons with disabilities.

AARP is committed to supporting mobility options for seniors. We included a question on additional ITN planning grant funding in our 2006 Voter Guides. More than 600,000 people in Connecticut are over 60 years old, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, which found that 28 percent of adults over 65 in the state did not drive. More than half of those non-drivers stay home on any given day because they can't find a ride.

Legislators overwhelmingly supported this transportation option in Connecticut as well as the continuation of funding for the Dial-A-Ride municipal matching grants. AARP CT also recognizes the needs of those seniors who cannot take public transportation because of their physical limitations and initiated a community volunteer transportation program in 2005 through our national Faith In Action partnership to help seniors and persons with disabilities receive door-to-door transportation service which is greatly needed in so many communities.

This program is currently available in 25 towns in the Eastern and South Central areas of Connecticut and supplements Dial-a-Ride services for those who need it. This bill will help to supplement mobility options even further by providing an additional means for seniors and persons with disabilities. The Faith In Action Program in the Eastern region was selected last year as one of the 5 communities to receive this award which allowed the program to expand beyond their 8-town region. ITN's and Dial-A-Ride grants together with volunteer ride programs are critical pieces of the mobility options puzzle for seniors and people with disabilities. We urge you to support Raised Bill No. 1395 An Act Concerning Independent Transportation Networks to expand the number of communities providing community-based transportation options for seniors and persons with disabilities.