



CONNECTICUT
Workforce
Development Council

**Testimony on S.B. 930 by William Villano
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Workforce Transportation Assistance

Connecticut needs every available worker to participate in the workforce. We have transitioned from an economy of city jobs, accessible by foot or public transportation, to a suburban economy. Jobs, especially low-wage service jobs, require people to travel farther from where they live. This job decentralization – the movement of jobs away from urban centers – is especially hard on low-income workers. Jobs are easily lost when tenuous transportation arrangements suddenly fail.

Each of Connecticut's five Workforce Boards is involved in transportation initiatives to help workers get to where the jobs are. While the specific program components may vary by region, most include the following:

Contracted Services/Connecticut Transit - provides early morning, late night and expanded weekend service through fixed-route additions

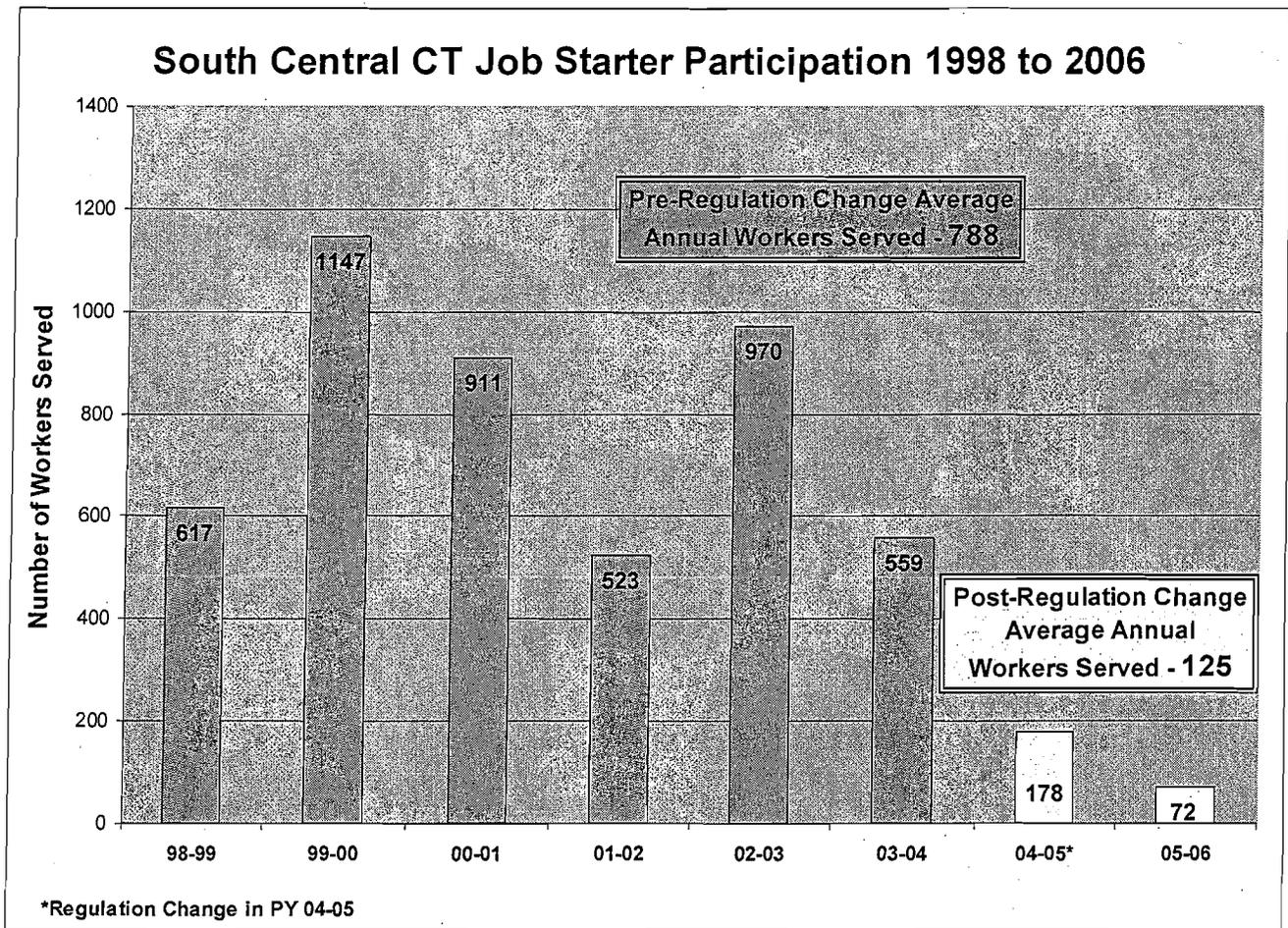
Contracted Services/Local Transit Districts - supplements existing transportation services to assist individuals to commute to work or training

Job Starter Programs - provides bus passes for up to two months bus to new workers enabling them to get to work until they have made ride share arrangements or can pay for public or personal transportation

Auto Emergency Funds - While we encourage the use of public transportation, public transit does not reach all jobs. The Auto Emergency Fund is a one-time grant to qualified low income workers for vehicle repairs, fees for insurance, vehicle registration and for licensing

Connecticut's five Workforce Boards provide transportation access to eligible workers, in conjunction with the Department of Social Services and the Department of Transportation. In FY 04-05, DSS revised program eligibility requirements limiting transportation services to only TANF recipients and TANF eligible individuals. While assisting newly employed workers transitioning from public assistance is important, this regulatory change has resulted in a precipitous decline in our ability to serve many other categories of deserving low-income individuals. For example, in South Central Connecticut's Job Starter Program, the average number of workers receiving transportation assistance dropped from 788 per year to just 125 per year; an 85% decrease (see attached). The net effect is that hundreds of individuals in South Central Connecticut and literally thousands statewide have been excluded from critically needed transportation assistance to work.

Just months ago, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee release a study of Connecticut's welfare reform initiative. Their findings say that **access to transportation is the greatest barrier to finding and maintaining employment** for most TANF recipients. This is equally true for low-income individuals who are not TANF eligible. SB 930 will allow the Workforce Boards to provide transportation services to all categories of Connecticut's low-wage workers for whom adequate and reliable transportation is the key to economic success.



SB 930 Will Provide Transportation Funding to Serve an Additional 730 Workers in South Central Connecticut*

Job Starter Program will <u>serve 600 more CT workers</u> to begin their work and/or job search activities (Bus passes for two months@ \$45.00/mo. x 600 workers)	\$54,000
Auto Emergency Fund will be increased to <u>serve 50 individuals</u> to provide a one-time vehicle repair or other operational requirements (Based on the average 2006 expense of \$540/recipient)	\$27,000
Estuary Transit District, which provides a critical link to shoreline employment, will carry workers from Madison to Old Saybrook and beyond, providing a much needed extension to existing service (Route extension will serve <u>an additional 80 workers</u>)	\$19,000
Total Cost to serve 730 additional workers	\$100,000

* Assumes equal share of \$100,000 for each of the five CT Workforce Board Regions