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**CSEA/SEIU Local 2001**  
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March 3, 2008

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

Senator Donald DeFronzo, Co-Chair  
Representative Antonio Guerrera, Co-Chair  
Room 2300, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

Senator Gayle Slossberg, Co-Chair  
Representative Christopher Caruso, Co-Chair  
Room 2200, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: **Public Hearing on HB 5041: AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, AVIATION AND PORTS AND A DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS.**

Members of the Transportation and GAE Committees:

My name is Monique Burns, and I work for the State of Connecticut as a Transportation Engineer 3 in the Department of Transportation (DOT). I work in the Project Development Unit am responsible for roadside safety and standards for the department, and I take pride in the services I deliver to Connecticut taxpayers.

With the passing of Senate Bill 1485, "An Act Concerning Contracting Standards," which my fellow members in CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 and I actively supported, one might think the DOT is on the right track to reform. However, the latest whimsical charge after the report from the Governor's "Commission on the Reorganization of the DOT" was leaked in January, is now to separate the DOT into two agencies.

I believe that to implement such a scheme would be another example of "**one step forward, two steps back**," for Connecticut's transportation policy.

Some of you may remember that back in June of 1969, "Public Act No. 768 – An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Transportation" consolidated the then-named "Connecticut Highway Department". At that time, the new DOT brought together, as Bureaus under one Commissioner, four separate State departments of:

Highways (established 1895);  
Aeronautics (established 1927);  
Rail & Motor Carrier Services (established 1963); and  
Waterways (established 1911).

Two new bureaus were also added:

Bureau of Administration; and  
Bureau of Planning and Research.

As quoted from the 1969 Governor's Annual Report, which is required annually per Section 4-60 of the general statutes, the newly formed Transportation agency was established to maintain a modern, efficient and well-balanced transportation system and:

*"...was set up to serve and to integrate the overall transportation needs of Connecticut, consistent with the elements of public safety, service and convenience. As mushrooming traffic in all phases demands more facilities, the Department is organized to weigh carefully the balance between maximal services and minimal dislocation of people and businesses, with particular attention to the preservation of natural and historic features, and with least impact on the total ecology of Connecticut".*

The key to this new agency was to **integrate the functions of all State Transportation agencies**, a stark contrast to the current proposal to create two separate agencies.

During the years immediately after the creation of the DOT, quoted here from 1971-1972 Administrative Reports to the Governor:

*"...there is a continued effort to adjust the organizational structure to provide better functioning operations and strict controls were imposed on the filling of all vacancies, promotions and reclassifications so that maximum use was made of internal staff to preclude the need to outside hire."*

Let me just give you a quick look at the trend of employee reduction over the past 40 years.

In 1969 the staff levels at the newly formed DOT was 6,100 with minimal to no use of outside consultant forces.

In 1976, the staffing level was 5,000 with public forces completing the design of 46 projects totaling \$54 million, and consultant forces completing design of 6 projects valued at \$91 million. An additional 30 new projects were assigned to consultants at \$200 million that year.

In 1990, staffing levels were 4,228 with state employees completing 48 projects at \$85 million, and consultant forces completing 29 projects valued at \$455 million.

In 2000, the staff levels were 3,762, with state forces completing 29 projects totaling \$135 million, and consultant forces completing 83 projects worth \$246 million.

DOT staff levels have been reduced from 6,100 employees strong in 1969 to 3,225 weak, as of 2006, with a huge reliance on outside consultant forces.

This staggering reduction in staff available to perform the same amount of work, as total road miles have increased to 20,892 in 2006, has crippled the Department. Clearly, the current and previous Administrations have continued to place a greater reliance on consultant forces to perform the same work that was once performed by state employees, despite overwhelming evidence proving these private sector options are more costly to state taxpayers. This is what has made the Agency, as a whole, ineffective.

It is no wonder how and why we are where we are. The question of the hour is; how do we fix it?

The proposed separation of the DOT into two agencies is not the answer. Instead the separation will create a duplication of services and de-integrate an agency that was put together 39 years ago:

*"...to develop and maintain a modern, efficient and well-balanced transportation system."* (Public Act No. 768)

In addition, the proposed separation will disconnect all the lines of communication, all the policies, all the procedures, all the job classifications, all the accountability, all the responsibility and on and on that have been accomplished and set in place since the DOT was formed with the consolidation of 6 bureaus in 1969.

Where the agency has fallen off its tracks is NOT with how it is organized. It has fallen off its tracks because of a lack of vision by a true transportation leader, as evidenced by the numerous appointed commissioners over the last 12 years.

There has been too much political dancing by DOT Commissioners over the past decade to look good in the eyes of the public (i.e., contracting-out pork-belly projects pushed by lobbyists for private sector consultants). There has been erosion of leadership by corrupt personnel who have been too closely tied to private contractors. Managers have been given the responsibility to get the job done but not the authority to make it happen in a timely and cost-effective way with backing from their superiors. There have been too many private consultant inspectors with a profit-driven agenda and too few inspectors committed to adhering to project contracts and a "quality of services" agenda. There have been layoffs, poor recruitment efforts, hiring freezes and work that should be performed by state forces instead being outsourced to consultants.

This has all come about because the DOT lacks leadership committed to quality, is under-staffed, and over-reliant on private sector consultants. Simply put, the DOT needs:

Strong leadership with a vision;

Increased state forces to perform its work; and

Authority and support from this legislative body to get the job done.

Further, what the DOT does NOT need is more bureaucracy.

I ask you; has the reduction in State DOT forces come about by Administrative design? If so, then the current and former Administrations have achieved their goal. If this is not the case, and the Governor and the legislature really want to put the DOT train back on track, consider the following:

1. Recruit more staff and bring DOT's work back "in-house" to State employees whose driving force is not profit. The Department's staffing levels have been slashed by nearly 50% since 1969. **When the Governor or their Office of Policy and Management layoff staff, allow retired positions to go unfilled, establish hiring freezes, and allow work that publicly-employed engineers could do, but can't because there aren't enough of us, the crises we have seen over the last two Administrations will continue or worsen with the creation of two Agencies duplicating services.** Too many of the functions required in any one bureau are crossover functions. One location with larger staff will better serve the transportation needs of the state.

2. Provide more resources for hiring maintainers to perform repair and maintenance work required on our aging infrastructure. **Currently, there are 1,600 outstanding Bridge Maintenance Memorandums (BMMs), which vary in degree of required repair, with some critical in nature. An additional 158 new BMMs have been written since the beginning of 2008.** We need to replenish our maintenance forces to perform these repairs. One of the most critical places where more resources are needed is in the Office of Maintenance. We need to fix what we have first.

3. Put the power of critical oversight back in the hands of publicly employed state workers, not with the fox who is watching the hen house. In other words, **end the practice of private sector consultants inspecting other private sector consultants.**

4. Hire a Commissioner who has the technical knowledge, leadership skills, and authority to steer the Department in a fiscally prudent manner and establish a vision or mission of the Department. **The decision of who to appoint as Commissioner should be based on what they offer to state taxpayers, NOT what political leaders can offer to the candidate, and vice-versa.** Let's end the practice of lobbyists and politicians tempting Commissioners with high-salaried private sector positions as reward for pushing through special interest driven agendas when they retire from civil service.

5. **The Governor should personally sit down with senior leaders at the DOT – both workforce and management – and ask how best to implement the course correction we need.** Not only should she ask both labor and management, many of whom have worked for the Department for 25 years and really know the “ins and outs” of the agency, to offer solutions for change, she should implement the top three recommendations from each. It should be noted again that the separation of the DOT into two new bureaucracies was NOT one of the original recommendations by the Governor's Commission on Reorganization of the DOT.

6. **Move the implementation date for Senate Bill 1485 up so that “Clean Contracting” in the DOT is up and running and working for Connecticut taxpayers now.** Waiting until next year and 2010 for the bill's primary protections to take effect is like holding a fire sale on public transportation projects, with the citizens of this state footing the bill.

7. **Pass legislation that makes corrupt agency managers and appointed officials truly accountable for willful waste, fraud, and abuse.** In other words, hefty fines and termination – not simply a transfer to another position where they can do more damage – is the only way to deter corruption.

8. Gather ideas and input from other states' transportation workforces. **Many states are looking how to better integrate the work of all employees within their agencies, NOT how to break them apart and create more bureaucracy.**

Sometimes it is necessary to take a look back to take a step forward. By looking at the reasons the DOT was created, reviewing the goal and mission that was established in 1969, and analyzing where we have gone wrong since then, we may better be able to define the steps to get DOT back on track.

Thank you for taking time to hear the voice of the department's front-line workforce. We look forward to further opportunities to work with your Committees in reforming the State Department of Transportation.

## **Monique Burns**

Transportation Engineer, Connecticut Department of Transportation  
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