



March 11, 2008

To: Human Services Committee

Re: S.B. No.664 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING INDEPENDENT TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS.

The City of Torrington Sullivan Senior Center is in favor of S.B 664 An Act Concerning Independent Transportation Networks and is currently funded by the State of Connecticut to develop and plan a self-sustaining community based regional transportation system.

The Sullivan Senior Center is working in conjunction with the Western CT Agency on Aging, Northwestern CT Transit District, Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials, Northwest CT Council of Government, transportation providers and area stakeholders to develop a plan for a Rural Independent Transportation System (RITS).

There are many seniors in rural northwestern Connecticut who do not have adequate transportation. Lack of mobility is one of the main detriments to the quality of life. When providing transportation in a rural area it is necessary to maximize existing resources and operate in a cost effective manner because of the lack of population density in the 745 square mile area. Upon conducting focus groups and interviewing stakeholders, "gaps in service" have been identified and we have learned the demand for service is greater than the supply. Fixed bus routes, and in some cases, dial-a-ride systems do not meet the needs of people to access health care, shopping assistance, appointments for non health related trips and affordable service for socialization are nearly non-existent. Current providers are very specialized in reference to trip purpose and serve a specific segment of the population.

This project was unable to join the ITNAmerica® Connecticut cluster. Due to the rural nature of the area and the lack of population density, it was determined there were not enough resources to support the ITNAmerica® structure. A rural model is being developed; therefore sometime in the future the opportunity may present itself to become a member of ITNAmerica®.

To help the RITS Advisory Council attain its goals, transportation planners Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc, were hired to work with the group and we are diligently studying existing nationwide rural systems, researching funding sources, reviewing current licensing and insurance statutes effecting volunteer drivers using their own automobiles and successful volunteer

systems. To continue the work of this group it is imperative to provide the second round of grant funding to ensure the successful design and implementation of the Rural Independent Transportation System in the 19 towns of rural northwest Connecticut.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy S. Hodkoski

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