



## Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency

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March 11, 2009

Testimony in Support of Committee Bill No. 735  
Transportation Committee

Dear Senator Donald DeFronzo, Co Chairman and Representative Tony Guerrero, Co Chairman:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for Committee Bill No. 735, an act improving bicycle and pedestrian access.

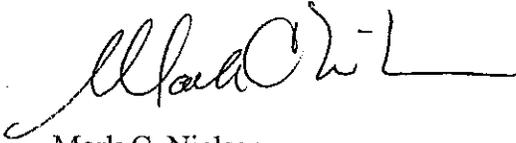
As a transportation planner for nearly 30 years and the current Executive Director of the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency, I have worked to implement bicycle and pedestrian projects and promote user safety on both facilities for many years. More recently I have had the opportunity of participating on the state Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Committee. This Committee has been working diligently on re-crafting the goals and action strategies to improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the state and to ensure that all users have access to these facilities and can use them in a safe and secure manner. However, it has become apparent that this Committee serves only an advisory role under the guidance of the Department of Transportation and will be in existence only until such time as the state bicycle and pedestrian plan is completed. It has been recognized by the Committee that, what is essential to furthering the goals of the plan, is the establishment of a permanent committee or board to provide direction and advice on how to make Connecticut a leader state in bicycling and pedestrian activities. The creation of the Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board would fill that essential gap and elevate the discussion of the bicycle and pedestrian needs to a much higher level. With the creation of this Board, the potential for implementing many of the actions strategies being considered in the new state bicycle and pedestrian plan would be substantially increased.

A second issue that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee has wrestled with is the lack of funding. Federal aid funds from the US Department of Transportation support the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, but these funds are limited, are not sufficient to meet the needs of the state and require a local match. The provision to allocate 25% of the funds available under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program and 25% of the highway safety funds would provide an additional source for completing not only bicycle and pedestrian projects but would also enhance access to transit and rail station, provide safe routes to schools and other activities and allow communities to construct traffic calming projects that would make our cities and towns more liveable, walkable and bikeable. However, I would recommend that the legislature also consider a change that would reduce the amount of the federal aid match that has to be provided by the local sponsor. I respectfully request that you consider requiring the state to provide at least 50% of the match funds required, as is currently the case with most other federal

aid transportation programs. This would provide greater leverage of federal aid funds and ensure that these types of projects are implementing in much more timely manner.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment and offer my support to this bill; it offers the best opportunity to realize the expansion and enhancement of bicycling and walking through the state of Connecticut.

Respectively Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark C. Nielsen', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark C. Nielsen  
Executive Director  
Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency