



August 19, 2009

Testimony before the

**Transportation Committee**

Regarding

**Status of ARRA Transportation Projects**

made by

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The Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) is made up of 12 towns: Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Eastford, Killingly, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Sterling, Thompson, Union, and Woodstock. Our region is rural. We have approximately 85,000 residents. However, we cover a large area ( ) and contain significant road mileage ( ).

When the so-called “Stimulus Package” was announced our towns were excited about the prospect of addressing a range of transportation needs in our region. As the details of the ARRA program emerged that optimism evolved to pessimism. We use the word “evolve” because the initial months of ARRA were in part an urgency to put forth projects and then a long period of relative silence as to what would or would not happen and what projects were actually eligible for funding. Early on (late 2008) the Department of Transportation asked us for priority projects – soon afterward the Governor reached out to towns leaders for “shovel ready” projects. In hindsight, however well intended in terms of getting projects ready for action, this resulted in much confusion. Confusion in large part because our towns were not sure what was eligible and what was not eligible – the result was that our towns submitted many projects (a good many of which were not transportation related) to the Governor for funding consideration.

Funding under ARRA for NECCOG totals \$1.1 million for Rural Funds, \$299,000 for Other Urban Funds and \$910,000 for Urban Funds. NECCOG initially identified 43 transportation projects. However, that list was reduced significantly when the actual parameters of eligibility became known to us. We initially reduced our projects to eight and are now at four projects.

**Town of Brooklyn - Pavement Preservation Allen Hill Road (Urban)**

**Description** – Classified as an **Urban Collector** this project involves pavement preservation. No permits are required and engineering will be provided by the Town's engineer.

Length: 3.08 Miles – Route 6 (Providence Road) to Route 205 (Wauregan Road)  
Width: 23'± avg.  
Posted Speed Limit: 30 mph  
No. Driveways: UNK  
No. Square Yards: 13,853+/- min – 42,000 +/-  
Tons Asphalt @ 1-1/2" Overlay: 3,600

**Total Cost** – Estimated Cost = **\$210,000** (1 mile or whatever the monies cover up to the full length of the road)

**Employment and other benefits** – The employment for this project is estimated to be 8-12 weeks with up to 25 equipment operators, truck drivers and laborers.

### **Town of Killingly - Lake Road Pavement Preservation/Reconstruction (*Urban*)**

**Description** – Classified as an **Urban Collector**, the portion of Lake Road to the west and south of the Town's Industrial Park from Forbes Road to State Route 101, a distance of about 0.61 miles long by 22' wide. It is rough and should be reconstructed. Lake Road is a Town road requiring local permitting only. Permitting and construction plans can be completed for the commencement of construction within 120 days.

**Total Cost** – The cost to rehabilitate the pavement of .61 miles of Lake Road is estimated to be **\$700,000** (\$350,000 available) (\$210/LF).

**Employment and other benefits** – The employment for this project is estimated to be 26 weeks with 75 equipment operators, truck drivers and laborers for 26 weeks with an additional four weeks of paving.

### **Town of Plainfield - Route 12 Sidewalk Project (*Rural*)**

**Description** – Classified as a **Minor Arterial**, Route 12 is a major north-south roadway in eastern Connecticut. This project involves the installation of sidewalks from 5<sup>th</sup> Street to McDonalds. The project is necessitated due to the regular use of this area for pedestrians and the relative high volume of traffic (2007 ADT are 11,800 and 10,200). This project, when completed, will greatly enhance safety.

**Total Cost** – The total cost of this project is being finalized – up to \$1.1 million available

**Employment and other benefits** – The employment for this project is estimated to be 3-6 weeks with up to 20 equipment operators, truck drivers and laborers.

### **Town of Putnam - Church Street Pavement Preservation (*Major Urban*)**

**Description** - Classified as a **Major Collector**, Church Street (Length: 0.69± mile Width: 24'±) connects the towns of Putnam and Thompson. This project will consist of pavement milling (cold planing) to a 1" depth in area of curb/sidewalks and a 1" thick bituminous concrete overlay from Providence Street to the Thompson town line. No permits are required and engineering will be provided by the Town's engineer. Sidewalks will also be reconstructed.

**Total Cost** – Estimated cost \$647,000

**Employment and other benefits** – The employment for this project is estimated to be 4-6 weeks with up to 20 equipment operators, truck drivers and laborers.

All funds allocated to the region will be utilized in order to cover the costs of the four projects and any additional monies required will be the town's responsibility. None of the four projects will be started (in terms of construction) in 2009.

The actual costs of projects are significantly higher than our calculations. For example, a sidewalk project that we estimated at about \$62 per foot came in at more than \$175 per foot. The issue of cost is not unique to ARRA. In most cases the cost of using federal/state monies for transportation increase costs significantly. In fact, many of our towns are now reluctant to use such funds due to the costs involved. Last year the Town of Plainfield turned back several hundred thousand dollars when the estimate for a one-half mile of road came back at over \$900,000. The town then went on and completed the project with town funds.

While we are frustrated that construction will not take place until 2010 – progress now appears to be happening at a good pace. CONNDOT is now in regular discussions with us and our towns in terms of the detailed scoping of the projects and ARRA process. On this point, CONNDOT has been most impressive. For example, the first detailed ARRA project meeting we had with CONNDOT involved a street/sidewalk project for the Town of Putnam. The meeting held covered the project in great detail and addressed all questions from the Town. In short, CONNDOT was well prepared, professional and they should be acknowledged for this.

NECCOG is also engaged in ARRA transportation through its management of the Northeastern Connecticut Transit District. Early on CONNDOT proposed to the various Transit Districts a collective approach – coordinated through CONNDOT. In our view this has worked quite well. We just recently received notification from CONNDOT that an allocation of \$538,080 for the purchase of 5 paratransit vehicles, support equipment and facility improvement (which includes a variety of "green" applications to the NECTD facility resulting in significant cost reductions). It is our understanding that these funds will be available this year.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.