

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION
Testimony of Gloria Mills, Executive Director
Before the Transportation Committee
In Support of Raised Bill 1093
March 11, 2009

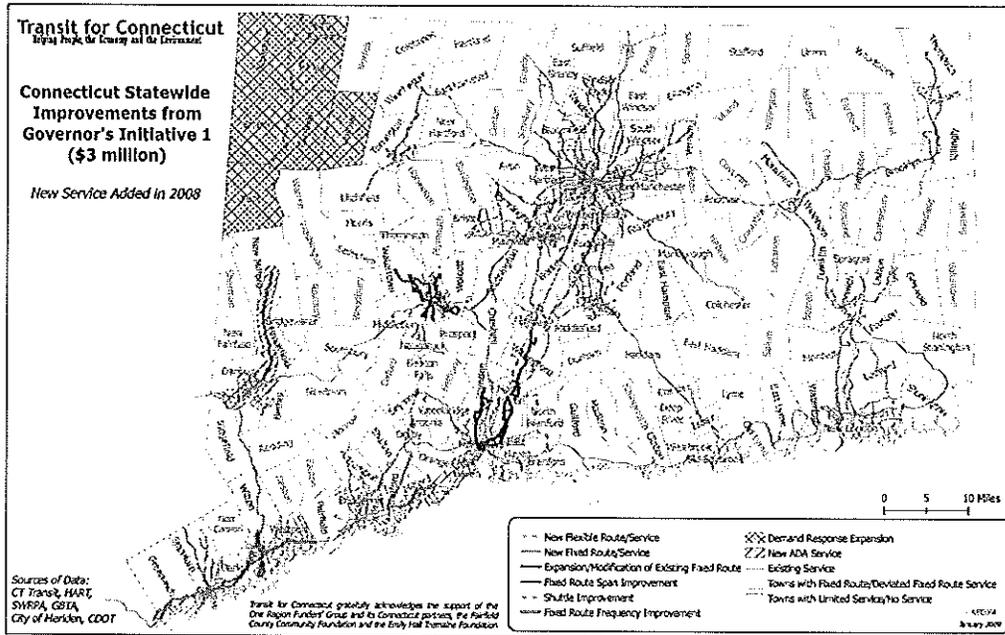
Good morning Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero and members of the Transportation Committee, on behalf of the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) I testify in support of **Raised Bill 1093**. Also, I submit written testimony in support of Committee Bill 735, Committee Bill 5640; Committee Bill 5895 and Committee Bill 6276.

Raised Bill 1093 provides the funds needed for the **State Matching Grants to Municipalities for Demand Responsive Transportation for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (CGS 13b-38bb)** to continue in FY2010 and FY2011. The funding for the state matching grant program was not included in the Governor's budget recommendations for the Department of Transportation's Bus Operations line item.

A critical investment for towns in addressing the mobility needs of their residents who are elderly or have disabilities, the program provides demand responsive transportation services in 136+ towns with a total of \$3.9 million in state matching grants and creates many regional transportation solutions. Because of state matching grants, regional transportation exists today in many areas of the state, including but not limited to the following:

- Tri-Town Medical Transportation program (Wethersfield, Newington and Rocky Hill) was expanded to surrounding towns of East Hartford, West Hartford, Bloomfield, Farmington and New Britain. This expansion allows more clients to reach medical care and flexibility in scheduling appointments, especially for customers who need multiple appointments per week for chemotherapy and radiation.
- Groton applies for East Lyme and Waterford; these 3 towns are joined by Stonington and Lisbon in 2009. This program allows the towns to contract with Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium (ECTC) as a broker to fulfill medical transport requests into Southern New London County.
- Greater Waterbury Transit District applies on behalf of its member towns (Cheshire, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Prospect, Thomaston, Waterbury, Watertown, and Wolcott). Prior to the matching grant program, GWTD did not contract for transportation service.

Transportation is the number one gap in service cited by providers and the number one missing service identified by Connecticut residents in the state's Long-Term Care Needs Assessment Survey. Every year, a larger percentage of Connecticut's 1 million baby-boomers (almost 1/3 of the population) and people with disabilities increase the demand for transportation options in a state where as many as 70 towns have no or limited public transportation (see map on next page).



But this program is about more than the mobility and independence of the elderly and people with disabilities. The state matching grant program is also about:

- jobs that family members are able to keep because their loved ones are safely transported to their destinations;
- access to medical care that keeps people healthy longer and living independently for greater cost savings to the state;
- stimulating the economy by providing seniors and people with disabilities access to the marketplace to spend their money on goods and services; and,
- improved quality of life for seniors and people with disabilities when access to the community and friends is maintained.

The state matching grant program to municipalities for demand responsive transportation for elders (60+) and persons with disabilities (**CGS 13b-38bb**), enacted in 1999 to expand demand responsive transportation services, allocates funds to towns based on a formula (50% based on town's elderly population/50% based on town's square mileage) to provide equality among the state's 169 towns. The program was first funded in special session by PA 05-4, providing \$5 million in each year of the biennium. The funds are to remain until expended. According to the Office of Fiscal Analysis, \$2.2 million remains available to be carried forward from FY 09 into FY 10 (as of February 10, 2009-136 applications had been approved and 8 were pending awaiting supplemental information before final approval).

CACT supports Raised SB 1093 and urge its passage to **restore the funding for the state matching grants to municipalities for demand responsive transportation for the elderly and people with disabilities** in FY 2010 and FY 2011. Thank you.

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The Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) supports and urges passage of **Committee Bill 735, an act improving bicycle and pedestrian access;** and **Committee Bill 5640, an act concerning the improvement of public access to transit stops.** Both these bills seek to improve the ability of Connecticut residents to choose and safely use modes of transportation other than the automobile to reach their destinations in a manner that is beneficial to their own health as well as to their community's by promoting transit use, walking and bicycling as green and economical alternatives to their car; and, reducing their carbon footprint and its impact on the climate, environment and air quality. Furthermore, Committee Bills 735 and 5640 do not require "new" state expenditures.

Transit users face many unnecessary and discouraging obstacles at the bus stop, including the lack of curb cuts, sidewalks and other amenities that protect them from the effects of weather and the automobiles that share the road with them and the bus they are trying to board or depart. It is common for transit users to walk on busy roads or in mud to reach a bus stop. For example, below is a picture of the bus stop located on Park Avenue at Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course in Fairfield. It has no sidewalk, it is located on a side of a hill, and it is a distance to the nearest signal and safe road crossing.

Committee Bill 5640 improves pedestrian access to transit stops by providing that at least five per cent of federal economic recovery funds received by the state for highway purposes shall be used for to improve pedestrian access to transit stops, and at least one per cent of state highway funds shall be allocated for the improvement of such access for the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, and for each state fiscal year thereafter. Improved pedestrian access to transit stops also increases transit use.



Committee Bill 735 provides for the accommodation of all users in the planning, design, construction and operating activities of all highways, roads and streets. Furthermore, a reasonable amount of funds received by the Department of Transportation (DOT) or any municipality for the construction, resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation or relocation of highways, roads or streets, shall be expended to provide facilities for all users including, but not limited to, bikeways and sidewalks with appropriate curb cuts and ramps, provided in no event shall less than one per cent of the total amount of funds received in any fiscal year be so expended. The DOT or municipality shall take future transit expansion plans into account where appropriate.

While this bill does not call for "new" state expenditures, it does provide that not less than twenty-five per cent of the funds received by the state from the federal government under the congestion mitigation and air quality improvement program and not less than twenty-five per cent of the funds received by the state from the federal government under the highway safety

improvement program shall be dedicated by the Commissioner of Transportation to projects that address bicycle and pedestrian needs, including, but not limited to:

- (1) Safe routes to transit programs that improve pedestrian and bicycle access to transit,
- (2) safe routes to schools programs that improve safety on walking and bicycling routes to schools,
- (3) safe routes for seniors programs that improve pedestrian access to senior centers, senior housing and other locations frequented by elderly persons, and
- (4) safe streets and traffic calming programs that eliminate hazards and address safety deficiencies for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Committee Bill 735 establishes a Connecticut Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board within the Department of Transportation for administrative purposes only; and, it establishes a non-lapsing account within the General Fund to be used to enhance public awareness of the rights and responsibilities of bicyclists and motorists jointly using the highways and to promote bicycle safety.

CACT supports both Committee Bill 735 and Committee Bill 5640. We urge passage of Committee Bill 735 and Committee Bill 5640. Thank you.

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The Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) supports **Committee Bill 5895, an act establishing a bus route between the north and southwest areas of Hartford.** This bill is the result of community organizations, CTTRANSIT and elected officials working together to address linking residential neighborhoods in the northwestern section of Hartford with employment, shopping, health care, and recreational resources located in southwestern Hartford and suburban West Hartford without requiring a bus transfer connection downtown.

The proposal advocated by many of the community organizations identified a new cross-town route that would begin near Blue Hills and Tower Avenue and eventually end in Newington Center. The cost of implementing this proposal was somewhere between \$800,000 and \$1.1 million.

CTTRANSIT's Planning Department was asked to investigate a less expensive alternative for a new cross-town route. The alternative option proposed is to re-route a number of existing trips on the 74-Granby Street line.

According to the concept paper put forth by CTTRANSIT, "the cost of re-routing these trips, and making other necessary service adjustments, is estimated to be less than one-tenth the cost of establishing an all-new route." Committee Bill 5895 provides that the sum of \$100,000 is appropriated to the Department of Transportation from the Transportation Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, for the operation of this bus service.

The demand for new cross-town routes in cities across the state is growing, but not the funding to operate them. The investment in this project would provide valuable information for future use by other communities as they seek to establish cross-town routes that do not require a bus transfer connection downtown. CACT supports Committee Bill 5698 and urges its passage by the General Assembly.

Lastly, the Connecticut Association for Community Transportation (CACT) supports and urges the General Assembly to pass **Committee Bill 6276, an act increasing fines and penalties for certain offenses committed against a transit worker in Connecticut.** The purpose of this bill is to provide protection to transit workers in Connecticut by fining or imprisoning any person who commits murder, manslaughter, assault in the first degree, assault with a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument, sexual assault, robbery, threatening in the second degree or kidnapping of a transit worker while such worker is acting in the performance of his or her duties. A person found guilty of such an offense shall not be fined or imprisoned more than one hundred fifty per cent of the maximum fine or term of imprisonment, respectively, otherwise authorized for such offense or be both fined and imprisoned.

An act that protects the safety of a transit worker also protects the safety of all customers the transit worker is serving. Consequently, CACT urges passage of the Committee Bill 6276 and the state's commitment to provide full enforcement of the law.

Thank you!