



Testimony In Support Of HB 5018, An Act Making Adjustments To State Expenditures And Revenues For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2011.

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Southwestern Connecticut's Regional Workforce Development Board

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important legislation.

Our direct role in transportation is through People to Jobs (www.peopletojobs.org), a project of The WorkPlace, Inc. People to Jobs began in 1996 as a Regional Transportation Task Force to improve access to jobs for anyone depending on public transportation. Since that time, People to Jobs has been working to improve access to employment by initiating and financing positive enhancements to the public transportation system in Southwest Connecticut that helps get thousands of people in the region to and from work and is counted on by employers.

For more than 10 years, the People to Jobs transportation program has helped thousands of Connecticut residents find and keep jobs. Today, many are dependent on bus transit services that were designed to meet their employment mobility needs. Expanded bus services, funded through the Connecticut Department of Transportation's "Transit Operations" budget and through the Connecticut Department of Social Services "Transportation Employment Independence Program" have provided this critical link.

Bimet Patal, Holly Abbott, and Anita Davis, all residents of Southwestern Connecticut, rely on public transportation. Bimet recently came to the United States and settled in Bridgeport where he lives, works, and goes to school. Says Bimet, "It is hard to be in a new country with a new culture – hard to find work, a new home, new friends. The buses in Bridgeport have helped me build a new life in my new country. Without them, I don't know how well I could have made it here." Per Holly Abbott, "The bus is very important to me." It gets me everywhere I need to be...looking for a job, daughter's daycare, shopping, and appointments." Anita Davis says, "Without the bus I don't know how I would manage to do all the things I have to do – go to work, grocery shopping, school. ...Here in Bridgeport, the bus is my lifeline to me being able to move ahead in life."

Employees and jobseekers need your help to eliminate transportation as one of the barriers to employment. The operating investment (subsidy) for Access to Jobs transportation is derived from the "Transit Operations" line item in the State's transportation budget as well as the "Transportation for Employment Independence" line item of the Department of Social Services budget. Over the past year, and continuing today, the funding in these line items has been threatened as the State attempts to deal with the increasing budget deficit. Any cuts in these line items will lead to cuts in service and job losses for the more than 7,800 average monthly unduplicated riders who board job access services over 1,200,000 times throughout the region.

There is no question about these cuts - - transit agencies are continuously working to increase efficiencies and there is no "low hanging fruit." We encourage legislators to fully fund Job Access transportation services and the Transportation Employment Independence Program to help meet the growing need for job-related transportation.

Thank you.