

March 10, 2010

Testimony before the
Committee on Transportation

Regarding

House Bill 5460, An Act Concerning the Transportation Strategy Board

Made by

John Filchak

Good Afternoon. My name is John Filchak. I am here today to speak to and support House Bill 5460, An Act Concerning the Transportation Strategy Board. I am a member of the Transportation Strategy Board – now serving my second term. I am also the Executive Director of the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments – one of the 15 Regional Planning Organizations in Connecticut. Today I want to make clear that I am NOT representing either the TSB or NECCOG. The changes put forth in House Bill 5460 have not been discussed at the TSB and I have not had the opportunity to discuss it with the membership of NECCOG (that will happen at our March Regular meeting). However, the changes put forth are important and I wanted to share my thoughts on this proposal.

First, it has been my view that the creation of the TSB was an important milestone for our state. It placed in a high profile the importance of approaching transportation strategically and engaging a broader spectrum of public and private sector policy makers to the discussion of transportation policy. This is reflected in the membership profile of the TSB. The geographic diversity, background (public and private sector), and the inclusion of commissioners of five state agencies contributes greatly to the opportunity to enhance policy debate and recommendation.

House Bill 5460 enhances this structure by adding the chairpersons and ranking members from the Transportation Committee to the TSB. This addition creates a connection that can only enhance to work of the TSB. The bill also provides for the TSB to select its chairperson. This is an important change. It provides for a greater degree of independence and ownership of the TSB by its members as they develop transportation strategies. The bill also enables the TSB to employ an executive director and administrator. We have excellent administrative assistance currently from OPM, but lack the direct transportation planning expertise that is found at the Department of Transportation. This bill provides such access to CONNDOT staff. I want to point out that our state, through the Department of Transportation, has an array of expertise that can greatly enhance the work of the TSB. In my view, the TSB has not utilized the resources/expertise that our state has within the Department. The result is that in the formation of the current strategy we are not connected in the ways that we should be with our state's transportation planning efforts as conducted by our Department of Transportation. Those planning efforts are extensive and impressive. I would urge the

members of the Committee to go to the Department's website and view the planning conducted by CONNDOT. Just as we need the linkage with this committee – the TSB needs a more direct linkage with the planning professionals at DOT.

The largest change proposed by House Bill 5460 is found in Section 2. This section moves the responsibility of long-range transportation planning from the Department to the TSB. *"The statewide long-range transportation (LRP) is the federally recognized transportation plan for the State of Connecticut. It is a federally mandated policy document that outlines strategies and actions for addressing transportation issues and needs in Connecticut. It is prepared pursuant to Section 450.214 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) which implements Section 135 of Title 23 of the United States Code. This plan, which is submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, must cover a period of at least 20 years. The actions in the plan are general (as opposed to project-specific or region-specific) so that they can remain relevant over time, even if unanticipated changes occur. The statewide LRP serves as a framework for preparing future, more project-specific transportation plans such as the Department's Master Transportation Plan and the State Transportation Improvement Program¹."* This change places the TSB where it should have been in the beginning: at the forefront of strategic development for the state's transportation policy. In no way is this change it intended (nor should it) alter the work done by DOT staff in the preparation of the Plan. Their work is solid, professional. Again, the intent is to plug the TSB into a true strategic role in sync with the professionals at the Department and our state in general.

The approach proposed is similar to that used by the State of Washington. They have a State Transportation Commission, which in part is charged *"....to propose policies to be adopted by the governor and the legislature designed to assure the development and maintenance of a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation system which will meet the needs of the people of this state for safe and efficient transportation services."* Attached to this testimony is a short overview as to how transportation policy is developed and implemented in the State of Washington. I believe that it is instructive to the possibilities that we could achieve in Connecticut with a revised TSB.

Without question transportation is one of the key issues to our future prosperity as a state. Transportation policies established will impact our economy, landscape and quality of life. The TSB is in a unique position to enhance strategic transportation policy development. The changes put forth by House Bill 5460 represent an important step in achieving that opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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¹ Connecticut Department of Transportation
http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dpolicy/lrp/2009lrp/lrp2009_final_document_june_2009.pdf

Relationships between Washington Transportation Plan, other State and Federal Plans, and Transportation Projects

Statutory Overview

The Legislature revised the state transportation planning statutes recently, enacting Chapter 516, Laws of 2007. At the State level, the Washington State Department of Transportation continues to be responsible for developing a statewide multimodal plan – a plan focused on state owned and state-interest facilities. The Transportation Commission **remains responsible** for a "comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation plan" – based (1) upon the transportation policy goals enacted by the Legislature in RCW 47.01.012 and (2) consistent with the Growth Management Act (GMA) goals.

This plan – which is known as the Washington Transportation Plan -- must result from an ongoing process involving significant transportation interests and the general public from around the state and, at a minimum:

- Establish a vision for development of the statewide transportation system;
- Identify significant statewide transportation issues; and
- Recommend statewide transportation policies and strategies to the legislature.

The relationship between the WTP and other required state and federal plans

Federal law requires that each state have a Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan. The current 2007 – 2026 WTP fulfills the requirements for both the state multi-modal and federal long-range plan requirements.

In general, the federal requirements in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) are quite similar to the transportation planning obligations articulated by the state. SAFETEA-LU features consistent with previous federal transportation planning law include:

- Federal reliance on the statewide transportation planning process as the primary mechanism for cooperative transportation decision making throughout the State.
- Coordination of statewide planning with metropolitan planning.
- Emphasis on fiscal constraint and public involvement in the development of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
- Emphasis on involving and considering the concerns of Tribal governments in planning.
- State development of statewide transportation plans and programs.
- Plan and program shall be developed in consultation with affected local officials with responsibility for transportation in non-metropolitan areas.

The Transportation Policy Goals

Preservation

To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services;

Safety

To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system;

Mobility

To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State;

Environment

To enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment; and

Stewardship

To continually improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.

Significant SAFETEA-LU modifications to the statewide planning process include:

- Coordinate metropolitan planning with statewide trade and economic development planning activities
- Will consider and implement projects, strategies and services that support the economic vitality of non-metropolitan areas.
- Safety and security of the transportation system are separate planning factors to be considered.
- Promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.

SAFETEA-LU requires each State to adopt a Long Range Statewide Plan that is more detailed than WTP is with regard to natural or historic resources, environmental mitigation, and capital, management and operational strategies. Congress is expected to enact new federal transportation planning legislation in 2010 or 2011 that will likely be significantly different from SAFETEA-LU.

Transportation Projects

Federal law requires a **State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)** that is used for distributing federal funds to specific state, regional and local projects. The STIP must cover a 4-year period and be updated at least every 4 years. Each project or project phase included in the STIP shall be consistent with the long-range statewide transportation plan, except within Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), where they must be consistent with the MPO plan.

The WTP does not focus on specific projects, although it may recommend programs or improvements to meet identified needs. It is the Legislature that adopts a WSDOT project list with each biennial transportation budget. Revenue from the state fuel tax is limited to use on highways, streets, roads and ferries only.

Each county, city, port and transit agency has its own capital improvement program and project selection process. Those cities and counties required to plan under the Growth Management Act -- the vast majority of Washington cities and counties -- must adopt 20-year plans with transportation and land use elements that support each other. The requirement that WTP be consistent with GMA goals strengthens the land use and transportation connection from the bottom to the top and begins to connect planning and projects statewide as they are locally.

