



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Office of the
Commissioner

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Public Hearing – March 10, 2010 Transportation Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Joseph F. Marie Department of Transportation

H.B. 5455 – An Act Updating the Master Transportation Plan and the Existing Transportation Facilities Assessment Report.

(Department of Transportation proposal)

The Department of Transportation (Department or ConnDOT) supports H.B. 5455 to update the Master Transportation Plan required under CGS 13b-15 and the Existing Transportation Facilities Assessment Report required under CGS 13b-16 to reflect changes in state and federal laws.

Master Transportation Plan:

Within the past ten years a number of boards and commissions with statutory responsibilities pertaining to transportation have been established. (Such boards and commissions include the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board, the Bradley Airport Board, the Connecticut Maritime Commission and the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission.) This bill would amend the Master Transportation Plan to require the Department to also consider reports, plans and studies prepared by these boards and commissions, as well as other boards and commissions that may be created in future years, when developing the Department's master transportation plan.

In recent years, legislation has been passed to require greater coordination of land use planning and transportation and greater coordination among state, regional and municipal levels to encourage responsible growth in Connecticut. H.B. 5455 would require ConnDOT to consider reports, plans and studies prepared by or for the state's Office of Responsible Growth and consider the regional long-range transportation plans prepared by regional planning organizations when developing the master transportation plan, supports such coordination.

Federal surface transportation authorization legislation requires state transportation agencies to prepare long-range transportation plans that address specific factors. Requiring ConnDOT to consider the policies and strategies identified in the state's long-range transportation plan and the mandated factors specified in the current federal surface transportation legislation as outlined in H.B. 5455, would provide for consistency of the state-mandated master transportation plan, which is project-specific, with the state's federally mandated long-range transportation plan, which is a policy document.

The current statute requires that the master transportation plan indicate the priorities for the next two and five-year periods, both by need and by fiscal capability in the area of public transportation. This proposal would provide a common five-year time period for all transportation modes for meeting the project requirements set forth in the existing statute. A five-year period for indicating project priorities

is proposed because the Department's federally-mandated Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, which lists federally funded projects, covers a four-year period and is used as a source of information on projects when developing the master transportation plan. In light of the fluctuations in the costs of fuel and raw materials, it is not feasible to indicate project priorities by need and fiscal capability beyond a five-year period.

It is proposed that the requirement that the master transportation plan "identify with specificity the expenditures to be made from funds received in the congestion mitigation and air quality grant in relation to the needs identified by employers in their compliance plans submitted pursuant to substitute house bill 5659 of the February, 1992, regular session" be eliminated because it is no longer relevant.

Existing Transportation Facilities Study:

CGS 13b-16 currently requires the Department to annually conduct and complete an investigation and study of the several modes of transportation in the state to evaluate the adequacy of the facilities and services connected with each such mode and determine the needs of the state transportation system. The study must be used to revise the comprehensive long-range master transportation plan. When conducting the study, the commissioner must consult with the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission.

The original provisions of Section 13b-16 were established in 1969 by Public Act 768. They have since been amended by public acts passed in 1972 to delete references to commissions such as the "steamship terminals commission" and the "Connecticut aeronautics commission" that are no longer in existence, in 1975 and 1983 to reflect changes in the structure and name of the Connecticut Public Transportation Authority, and in 2000 to reflect a provision of legislation passed in 1996 to require the master transportation plan to be updated every two years rather than annually.

H.B. 5455 would further update Section 13b-16(a) by:

1) changing the time frame for conducting the study of existing facilities from annually to every two years because the master transportation plan is revised every two years;

2) replacing the requirement that the "commissioner consult with the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission" with a broader requirement that the commissioner consider the plans and recommendations prepared by the various boards, councils and commissions that have statutory responsibilities pertaining to the various modes of transportation in Connecticut and consider the plans, studies and recommendations prepared by or for regional planning organizations. This change is proposed because other councils, commissions, and boards (such as the Connecticut Commuter Rail Council, the Connecticut Maritime Commission, the Bradley Board of Directors, the Statewide Incident Management Task Force and the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board) having statutory responsibilities pertaining to various modes of transportation have been established in the past twenty years, and new ones may be established in future years. This change would require ConnDOT to consider the plans, studies and recommendations of current and future boards, councils and commissions with statutory responsibilities with respect to the various modes of transportation in the state;

3) changing the requirement that the Department "conduct and complete an investigation and study of the several modes of transportation in the state" for use in revising the master transportation plan with a requirement that the commissioner "conduct and complete an assessment of the several modes of transportation in the state" for use in revising the master transportation plan; This change is proposed because many of the boards commissions and councils with statutory responsibilities pertaining to

various modes of transportation are responsible for developing recommendations, plans and/or policies relative to specific modes of transportation. Within the past twenty years, the role of the state's regional planning organizations has been strengthened and expanded by federal transportation legislation. Federal legislation requires a state's metropolitan planning organizations to prepare regional long-range transportation plans and requires state transportation agencies to consider them when updating the federally mandated, statewide long-range transportation plan. It is the current practice of the Department to consider the plans, studies and recommendations of these bodies when updating the master transportation plan and the federally mandated, statewide long-range transportation plan, rather than conducting studies that would duplicate their efforts; and

4) deleting the words "long-range" when referring to the state-mandated master transportation plan to avoid confusion with the federally mandated, statewide long-range plan which the Department prepares. Federal surface transportation legislation passed in 1991 requires the Department to develop and update, every three to five years, a statewide, 20-year, long-range transportation plan.

The Department currently considers the reports, studies, plans and recommendations of the regional planning organizations and various boards, councils and commissions with statutory responsibilities pertaining to various modes of transportation when revising the federally-mandated, statewide long-range transportation plan, which is a policy document, and the Department's master transportation plan, which is project-specific. An assessment of the adequacy of the various modes of transportation to meet current and future needs was published in June 2007 by the Department in the document, *Transportation in Connecticut: The Existing System*; the Department is currently in the process of updating this document.

Finally, the Department seeks to replace references in current statute to the federal *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century*, and replace with more generic wording "the current federal surface transportation authorization legislation," to eliminate the need to update this statute every time new federal surface transportation is passed.

For further information or questions, please contact Pam Sucato, Legislative Program Manager for the Department of Transportation, at (860) 594-3013.