

# Regional Plan Association

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Amanda Kennedy, Regional Plan Association

March 12, 2010

Statement to the Connecticut General Assembly Transportation Committee  
re: Bill 5474, AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTRONIC  
TOLLS AT THE STATE'S BORDERS.

Thank you for providing an opportunity to speak on the border toll concept. My name is Amanda Kennedy and I am a planner with the Stamford office of Regional Plan Association, a tri-state organization focused on advancing the region's economy and protecting our environment and quality of life. We at RPA felt it was important to come up today to speak on this issue because although we are opposed to introducing border tolls, the goal of raising revenue for transportation investment is tremendously important for the future health of Connecticut and of the region. In the last twelve months, there have been a couple of really valuable documents produced on the state of Connecticut's transportation finances—Commissioner Marie's recently released capital plan lists almost \$4 billion in unfunded road and transit projects, which doesn't even include crucial initiatives such as the New Haven Springfield Commuter Rail or addressing the future of the Aetna viaduct. It's clear that Connecticut will need to establish a more diverse and stable revenue source than the existing gas tax. The second valuable document is the Tolling Study prepared last year by Cambridge Systematics for the TSB, which analyzes a menu of options that could affect revenues and congestion throughout the state.

It's disappointing that this committee has selected border tolls from that menu as the option to pursue. Border tolls would disproportionately impact the residents of border communities, discourage the growth of interstate regional economies, and create congestion and deterioration of local roads while doing nothing to solve congestion on our highways. In my written testimony I am submitting two maps showing the locations of commuters to Hartford, and commuters to Stamford. Both employment centers draw workers from out of state, and businesses count on the ability to reach outside of Connecticut's borders for skilled workers. Border tolls at Enfield work against efforts to boost a Hartford/Springfield Knowledge Corridor that will ultimately be tied by rail. Stamford has been very successful at attracting businesses from Westchester County, who know that they'll be able to keep their workforces if they move across the border to Connecticut. A \$3 toll

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would make such a move less attractive and slow the momentum of a major locus of economic growth for the state.

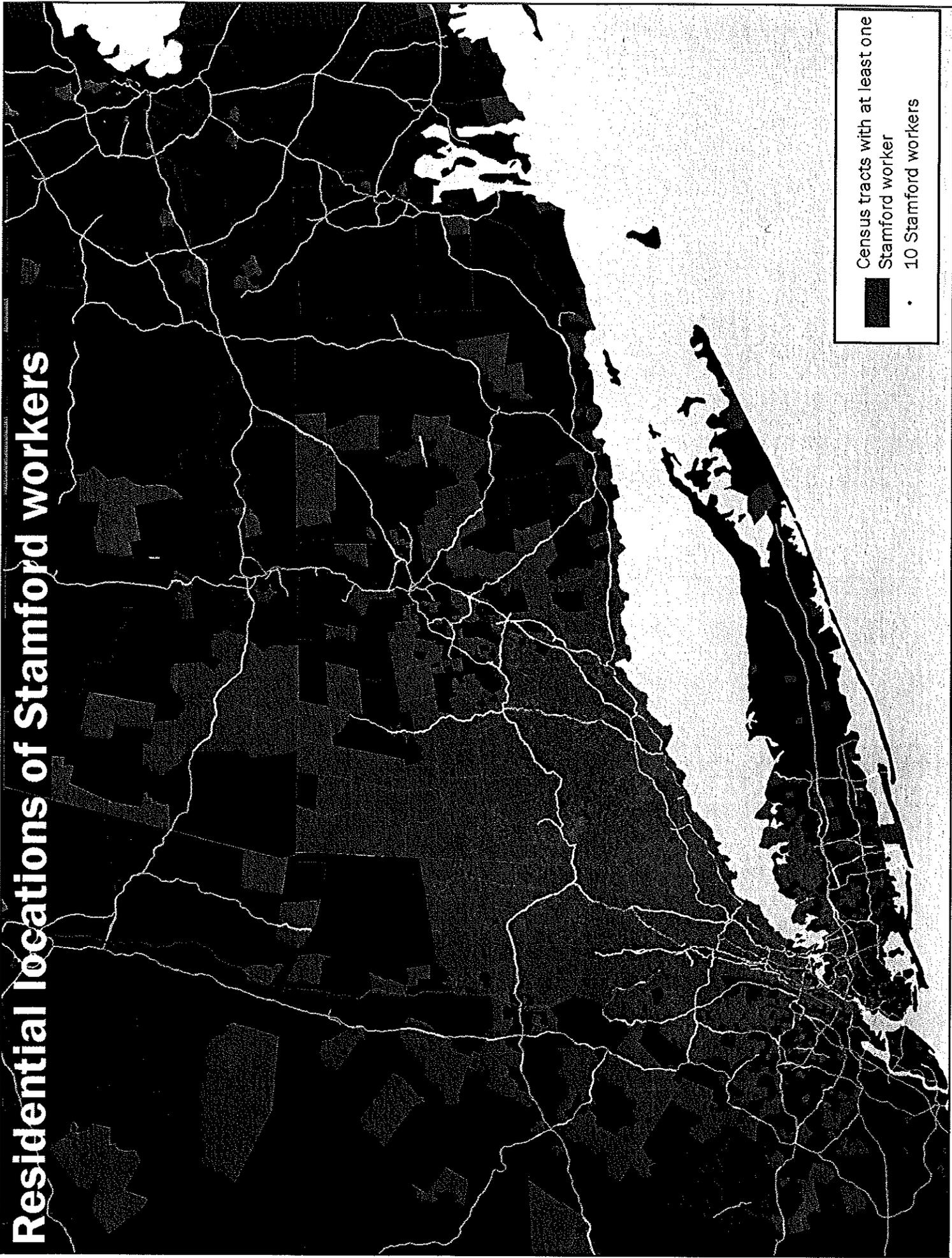
I'm asking this committee to instead focus on road pricing strategies that will more fairly distribute the burden of paying for our transportation system, and that will do more to improve highway congestion and reduce overall vehicle miles traveled. A VMT charge that works in place of or alongside the gas tax would incentive personal reductions in VMT, and as we transition away from gasoline as a motor vehicle fuel, would provide a steadier source of revenue. Road pricing by mile is not "pie-in-the-sky": It has been successfully demonstrated both in Oregon and in Germany, and Connecticut will ultimately need to pursue such a comprehensive strategy.

In lieu of full VMT pricing, we ask that this committee consider implementing variable tolls on our most congested highways, starting with the Merritt Parkway and I-95 in Fairfield County. Tolling these roads at times of peak usage would reduce congestion and shorten travel times for users who choose to drive at peak times. This option would produce considerable revenue that could pay for bus, rail, and pedestrian improvements for our coastal communities that can help us transition further from a car-dependent environment, as well as creating revenue that supports ongoing maintenance and capital projects elsewhere in the state. We also believe that drivers will be willing to pay for a roadway that is less likely to be jammed for hours any day of the week.

In closing, I need to point out that whatever tolling strategy we select will only be a part of the solution to financing transportation: we need to be better at prioritizing where we spend our transportation dollars, determine what projects are most important, and develop a system for funding them that is sustainable and equitable.

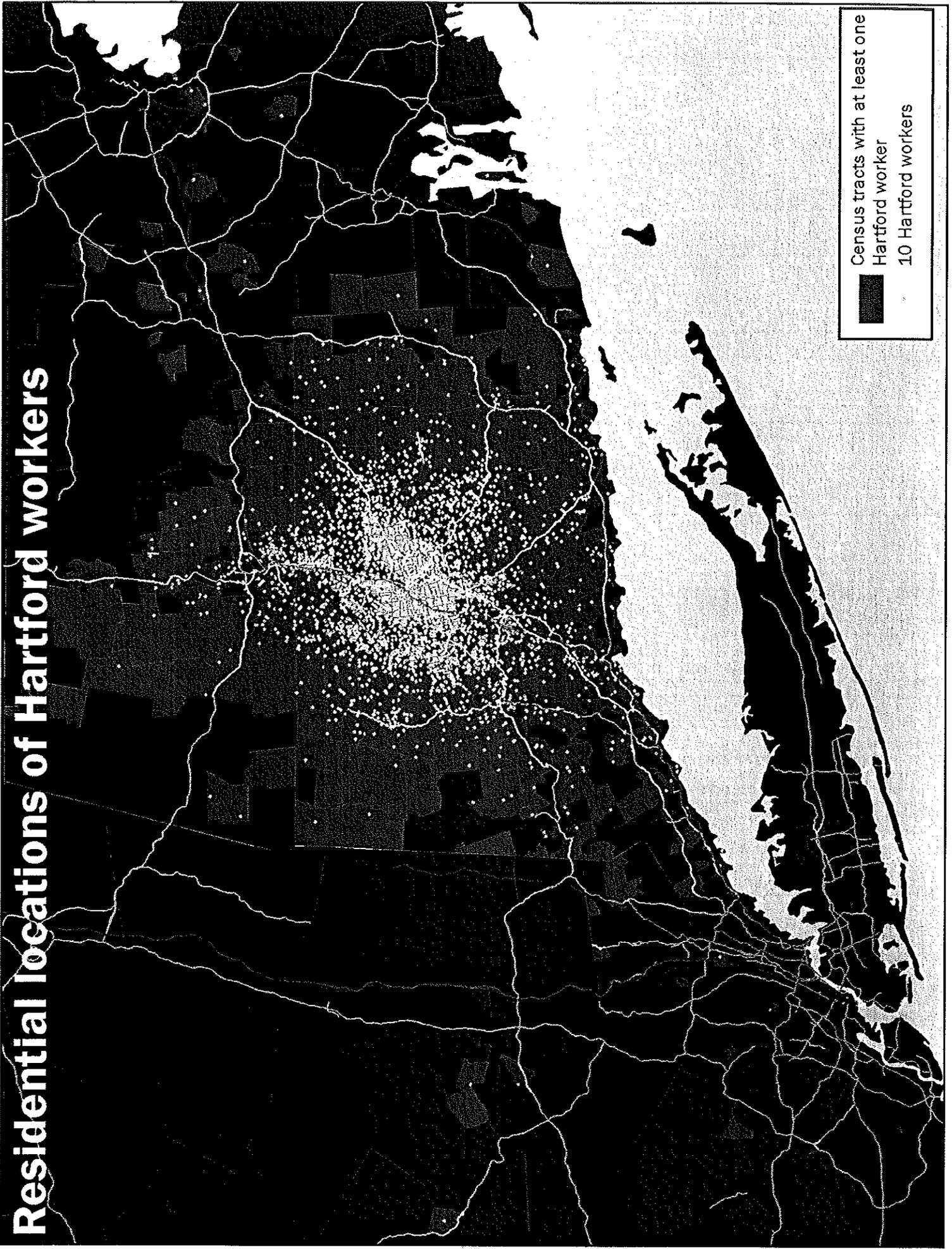
Thank you.

# Residential locations of Stamford workers



■ Census tracts with at least one Stamford worker  
• 10 Stamford workers

# Residential locations of Hartford workers



Census tracts with at least one  
Hartford worker  
10 Hartford workers