



TESTIMONY TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE REGARDING PROPOSED DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

On behalf to the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority (GBT) which provides transit service to ten communities in Eastern Fairfield County and Western New Haven County, we are commenting on the Governor's proposed budget for transit operations. Our service is critical to restoring the economic health of Connecticut. Thousand of individuals depend on GBT each day to access employment and hundreds of employers have access to a larger labor pool thanks to our services. If gas prices increase as expected demand for our service will grow significantly.

While we are pleased that there is some growth in the bus operations line item we need to make it clear that it will not be sufficient to maintain existing levels of service. Double digit increases in healthcare, fuel and workers comp costs have forced us to increase fares three times over the past five years and eliminate over 20% of our administrative staff in order to maintain existing service levels. In the last labor agreement we succeeded in obtaining language changes that reduced operating costs by \$100k per year and we have been effective in reducing overtime costs. Despite all this we will be reducing service hours this March and based on the proposed budget will need to make further reductions next year.

We could avoid these reductions if the amounts shown under Current Services for FY 2011/12 and requested for FY 2012/13 on page 347 of the DOT Budget were appropriated. However to minimize service hour reductions the amounts appropriated must not be less that the recommended amounts for these years.

On the other hand the amounts budgeted for ADA paratransit are not sufficient for maintaining this federally mandated program and may force further reduction in fixed route transit services. Currently GBT follows the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in providing this service - we do not carry anyone other than those we are mandated to carry. However conversely we cannot (and do not) deny trips. Since the fare we charge is capped by Federal law and only covers 10% of the cost of providing that trip and since for each additional 3 trips we need to

provide results in an additional hour of service, growth in demand for this service is straining our resources. Over the past two years we have been able to cover deficits in the ADA program by savings in our fixed route and terminal budgets. This approach is not sustainable.

We understand the difficulty you will have in putting together a budget this year. However we ask that you please remember the importance public transit pays in the economic health of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

**Ron Kilcoyne
General Manager/CEO**

