BRADLEY DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE

# Testimony Regarding the Powers of the Bradley International Airport Board of Directors

**House Bill No. 6139 - *AN ACT INCREASING THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF BRADLEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT***

Bradley International Airport, Connecticut's flagship commercial airport and New England's second largest, is a major economic driver for the State of Connecticut. The Bradley Development League, MetroHartford Alliance and key state legislators were instrumental in the last legislative session in creating the Bradley Airport Development Zone to seize upon the airport's potential and encourage economic development and we thank you for your role in that. Now before you is a proposal to provide the Bradley International Airport Board of Directors additional powers to help ensure that important decisions are made in a timely and strategic manner. Airports are becoming increasingly competitive and in order to enhance Bradley's position in the marketplace the Bradley Board of Directors needs to have the power and tools to act quickly and effectively.

We endorse the proposed bill which empowers the Board to hire managerial employees and establish salaries, approve significant contracts relating to airport operations, select consultants directly rather than only those recommend by the DOT, and streamlines their competitive bidding procedure for construction contractors, airport vendors, and other professional services.

**Bradley is already an Economic Development Engine but it has not reached its full Potential**

The importance of Bradley cannot be understated. In the Gallis Report (December 1999), the author states "Bradley potentially is the most significant facility influencing Connecticut's development within the `New Atlantic Triangle' and how the state and the Hartford/Springfield metropolitan region connect to the North American continent and the world." Connecticut's economy is inextricably linked to the world economy and Bradley is the State's most important link to the global marketplace.

**The Contribution Of Bradley International Airport to Connecticut's Economy, a Department of Economic and Community Development Impact Analysis (May 2005)**, determined that over the next twenty years Bradley will contribute, on average, more than $34 billion in output, nearly $11 billion in income for Connecticut's residents and sustain nearly 140,000 jobs. The report states, "These analyses show the critical role that Bradley plays in the local and regional economies as both an active employer and driver of economic impacts, but more so, as an invaluable transportation asset that propels Connecticut's people and businesses forward in an increasingly integrated and competitive international economy."

In Transportation 2035, a CRCOG publication it was reported that in the latest Economic Impact Survey, it was determined that Bradley contributes $4 billion in economic activity to the State of Connecticut and the surrounding region, representing $1.2 billion in wages and 18,000 full-time jobs.

**An empowered Bradley Board of Directors will enhance the airport's Competitiveness**

The Department of Transportation does a great job on airside activities such as keeping the runways open and ensuring flights are on time. DOT airport staff and management should be applauded for their efforts in this regard. However, at times, the constraints by which DOT must operate relative to new airport hires and contracting activities hamper Bradley's ability to reach its full economic potential. After former Marketing Director, Andre Libert retired, it took eighteen months to replace the position with Kiran Jain. Kiran did an outstanding job during her tenure but was attracted by another opportunity. After Kiran's departure, it took almost a year to hire Luis Perez. These periods were far too long to have such a strategic position left unfilled. Luis Perez' tenure was short lived as he got a more competitive offer from Dallas-Fort Worth airport. It is important for Bradley to be able to offer top-quality talent salaries that are competitive with other airports.

**Bradley is poised for great growth but must have the tools to reach its potential**

There are several very important initiatives that an empowered Bradley Board of Directors can influence:

1) The Bradley Master Plan (December 2005) calls for millions of dollars in additional capital improvements in the next 20 years including the replacement of the Murphy Terminal in order to meet expected passenger and cargo growth.
2) Continue to build the number of domestic destinations with direct flights and providing the lowest possible fares to these destinations.
3) Working to return transatlantic service to Bradley. Some form of incentive may be necessary to attract a carrier to create a new route to Europe.
4) The proposed high speed and commuter rail line between New Haven and Springfield is slated to have a link to Bradley International Airport. Currently, plans call for a bus link from the Windsor Locks station to the airport. The Bradley Development League has urged ConnDOT to carefully examine the possibility of a rail link on an existing spur rather than bus service.
5) The airport could benefit from aesthetic improvements as it is one of the least attractive entrances to a major airport.
6) There are approximately 280 acres of land on-airport that could be utilized for economic development and an enhanced effort at marketing this availability will spur commercial ventures.

The economic impact of Bradley International Airport will be all the greater if these various initiatives are fully realized.