



STATEMENT REGARDING

Senate Bill 800: *AA Restoring Commuter Rail Service from Waterbury to Hartford*

Transportation Committee

February 18th, 2011

The MetroHartford Alliance is the Region's economic development leader and Hartford's Chamber of Commerce. Our investors include businesses of all sizes, health care providers, institutions of higher education, and municipalities.

Senate Bill 800 proposes transferring all unexpended funds for the Hartford – New Britain Busway (the "Busway") to be used for the purpose of restoring commuter rail service from Waterbury to Hartford. We oppose this measure since the \$275 million in federal funds for this project cannot be diverted to a project that was not part of the original application and an attempt at such diversion will result in Connecticut's forfeiture of the funds. Moreover, the President's proposed budget continues to support this vital rapid transit project with \$45 million in additional New Starts dollars that will also be forfeited if we walk away from this unique opportunity to enhance intra-regional commuting.

Over the past decade, the Busway has withstood rigorous evaluation by the Federal Transit Administration and is now just months away from securing a full federal funding agreement. It is the first truly rapid transit project in the Region, reducing bottlenecks along our most congested area of road at the same time that it supports recent investments by employers in Hartford and New Britain and incents additional investment along the corridor into Hartford's Union Station. In fact, the Busway is a key component in an integrated mass transit system that will include the Springfield-Hartford-New Haven rail line to provide one seat ride service to Boston and New York along with transit connections to Bradley

International Airport. Our economic and job growth is intertwined with all of these projects and to sacrifice dramatically jeopardizes the entire system.

Of most immediate importance in the midst of this jobless recovery and continued 9.0% unemployment and even great underemployment, construction of the Busway stands to create 4,700 to 6,100 person year jobs. In addition, it will stimulate other hiring associated with the type of transit oriented development similar busway projects have spawned in other cities such as Cleveland, Ottawa, and Pittsburgh. We refer you to the attached documents for more information on the project's many benefits along with letters of support and our op-ed piece underscoring the importance of this project to the Region.

For all of these reasons and those illustrated in our attached documents, we strongly urge rejection of Senate Bill 800.

January 19, 2011

Honorable Dannel Malloy
Governor
State of Connecticut
State Capitol
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Malloy:

Each of the signatories below is a member, along with several other entities, of the Capitol Region Partnership, a coalition that is dedicated to collaborating on initiatives that are critical to the future prosperity of the Hartford Region. We were certainly heartened by your inaugural address and your commitment to balancing the budget while investing for the future. With that latter goal in mind, we write in support of the State moving forward aggressively with the construction of the Hartford – New Britain Busway (the “Busway”).

We fully understand and support your responsibility to scrutinize all projects that the State funds, especially in these challenging economic times. As you examine the Busway as part of that scrutiny, we want to reiterate our perspective and our enthusiastic and sustained support for proceeding with the initiative. The Busway was first proposed in 1999 as the most effective means to attacking congestion on I-84 west of Hartford, a corridor which experiences the most significant congestion and accident issues in the Region. From the outset, the Busway was deemed superior to all the congestion mitigation solutions, including highway expansion, additional HOV lanes, and other transit alternatives. Over the past decade, the Busway has withstood the rigorous evaluation process of the federal transit administration and is now just months away from securing a full federal funding agreement, an agreement that requires the State to fund its portion of the construction costs.

The Busway will not only ease traffic congestion and its related environmental issues but will also be the first true rapid transit project in the Region with its 9.4 miles dedicated for buses and 11 commuter stations, a project that will be the foundation of a 21st century transit system in the Region. It will specifically enhance the operations of the City's major employers, incent others to locate operations in proximity to the Busway and the commuter rail line at Union Station, and strengthen the attractiveness of all higher education institutions in the corridor.

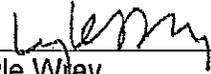
The Busway will include important transit assets, such as off vehicle fare payment, level platform loading, real-time bus information, specialized vehicles, and improved bike and pedestrian access at the stations. Furthermore, the towns along the Busway will capitalize on the significant economic and residential opportunities that come with transit oriented development.

While some may argue that only rail delivers true rapid transit, national and local research indicate that the Region does not have sufficient population size or density to support light rail and that our best option for enhancing mass transit alternatives therefore is via bus rapid transit. Especially in this time of budget challenges, it makes imminent sense to build a system that supports the community rather than hoping that a different system can transform the community.

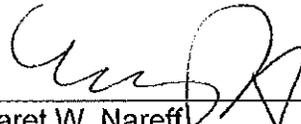
On a financial basis, the Busway leverages federal funding with U. S. DOT reimbursing the State for 80% of the projected cost of \$567 million. From an economic stimulus perspective, Busway construction is expected to create 4700 to 6100 person year jobs. While we can all agree that it has taken too long to move the Busway forward to construction and that the delay illustrates flaws in the State's process for planning, implementing, and managing transit assets, neither the delay nor the flaws diminish the value and viability of this important economic initiative.

We have enclosed a copy of a fact sheet that provides more details on the Busway. If you or members of your administration would like more details or would like to discuss the Partnership's support of this effort, please contact either Lyle Wray of the Capital Region Council of Governments at 860-522-2217 (x232) or Oz Griebel of the MetroHartford Alliance at 860-525-4451 (x212).

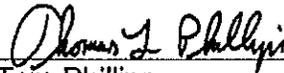
Sincerely,



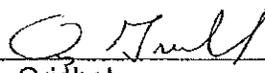
Lyle Wray
Capital Region Council of Governments



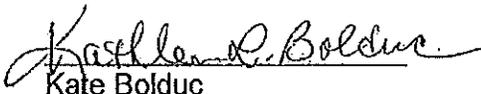
Margaret W. Nareff
Hartford Consortium for Higher Education



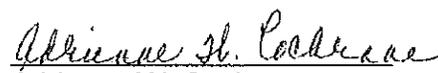
Tom Phillips
Capital Workforce Partners



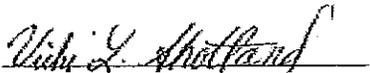
Oz Griebel
MetroHartford Alliance



Kate Bolduc
Greater Hartford Arts Council



Adrienne W. Cochrane
Urban League of Greater Hartford



Vicki Shotland
Greater Hartford Transit District

cc: Tim Bannon – Chief of Staff – Governor Dannel Malloy
Jeffrey Parker – Commissioner – Department of Transportation

Busway Key Transit, Economic Link

October 02, 2010
The Courant
By OZ GRIEBEL

Some of the region's largest corporate, educational and hospital employers are investing millions of dollars to improve and expand their operations in Hartford and New Britain. These extraordinary investments demonstrate confidence in the future of Central Connecticut and are critical to job retention and growth in both cities and the region. We must take advantage of these major investments by moving forward with two long-standing transit projects, the Hartford-New Britain busway and the Springfield-Hartford-New Haven rail initiative.

Completion of these projects will enhance intra-regional commuting along the busway corridor and allow rail passengers to go from Union Station in Hartford to Boston or New York without changing trains. They will also make Central Connecticut more attractive for capital investment, for students and for the best and the brightest in business, education and health care.

Studies of the busway and rail projects clearly demonstrate their feasibility, costs and benefits. Suggestions that we need another study to reassess the busway are unwarranted. Ten years of comprehensive analyses show the busway is a key component of an integrated mass transit system. It will reduce congestion, improve air quality, provide commuters with attractive transit options and complement the significant investments of Hartford, New Britain, and St. Francis hospitals, Aetna, Central Connecticut State University, The Hartford, Travelers and UnitedHealthcare in their complexes.

Additional studies will jeopardize \$275 million of federal funds that will generate 1,400 construction jobs per year and undermine more than a decade of efforts to build a rapid transit system. As the Bristol Press editorialized, our failure to move forward could result in the U.S. Department of Transportation awarding the \$275 million to a region more united and innovative in exploiting transportation opportunities for economic growth.

With construction scheduled to begin this spring, the busway could be running in three years. This rapid transit line with its exclusive right of way, permanent stations and frequent, fast and reliable service will give residents easier access to some of our most important educational, employment, entertainment and health care assets.