



# OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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## QUESTIONS FOR DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER NOMINEE

By: Paul Frisman, Principal Analyst

### COMMISSIONER OF TRANSPORTATION (CGS §§ 13b-3, 13b-4, 13b-57e, 15-101mm)

The transportation commissioner is responsible for all aspects of planning, developing, maintaining, and improving transportation in the state. Specific duties include: developing a comprehensive, integrated transportation policy; operating a modern, safe, efficient, and energy-conserving system of highway, mass transit, marine, and aviation facilities and services, including Bradley International Airport; cooperating with federal, state, interstate, and local agencies performing transportation activities; providing for the construction and repair of capital improvements needed to operate a safe and efficient transportation system; promoting coordinated and efficient use of all available and future modes of transportation; formulating and implementing plans to improve transportation safety; and studying means of providing parking facilities to encourage travel by combining motor vehicles and other forms of transportation. The commissioner also assists and interacts with the Connecticut Transportation Strategy Board to the extent provided by law (CGS § 13b-57e) and serves on the Board of Directors for Bradley International Airport (CGS § 15-101mm).

## **NOMINEE QUESTIONS**

1. Some legislators criticized the department's failure in 2010 to secure any funding for important state transportation projects from the federal TIGER (Transportation and Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grants. Why wasn't the department successful? What is the department doing to improve its ability to secure such funding in the future?
2. Some legislators favor border tolling as a way to raise revenue and decrease reliance on the State Transportation Fund. Do you support this idea? Why or why not? Are there other, more preferable, tolling options?
3. Revenue from the State Transportation Fund is expected to decline for several reasons, including the growth of energy efficient vehicles and the subsequent decline in fuel tax revenue. Among the options for supplementing and replacing this lost revenue are: implementing tolls; increasing the state gasoline tax; directly assessing road users for the cost of individual trips (vehicle-miles-traveled, or VMT charges) or reducing the size of the transportation program. What are your thoughts on these options?
4. The state's precarious fiscal situation and uncertainty about a successor to the federal transportation funding law means there may not be enough money for many transportation projects. How is the department determining which projects to fund first?
5. Please describe what constitutes a "state of good repair" for state roads, bridges, and transit. How much money is needed annually and for the next 20 years to maintain that infrastructure in a state of good repair? What are the prospects for keeping state infrastructure in a state of good repair, and what are the consequences of failing to do so?
6. Members of the Metro North Commuter Council have criticized the department for recently failing to inform the public about problems with the new M8 rail cars. What are you doing to improve communication with the public and Metro North commuters? How soon will commuters be able to ride the new cars? When will the last of the cars be available to commuters?

7. The Council's 2010 annual report also criticized the lack of progress in expanding parking at rail stations. What is DOT doing to improve this situation?
8. Please briefly describe the funding, planning, and construction status of the New Hartford-Hartford-Springfield High Speed and commuter rail projects. How much more money is needed for the projects, and where will the money come from? What improvements would have to be foregone if additional funding is not available?
9. What is the department doing to maintain and expand the state's freight rail system?
10. Some people have criticized the proposed Hartford-New Britain busway as an unnecessary diversion of money and resources from other state priorities, particularly expanded rail service. Is this criticism warranted? How does the plan to rebuild the I-84 viaduct in Hartford affect planning for the busway?
11. Governor Malloy has made development of state ports a priority. Would a state port authority improve the way the state develops and maintains transportation infrastructure? How should such an authority be funded? Should it be housed in DOT or should it be a separate entity?
12. Should the state change the way it administers Bradley International Airport, perhaps by creating an Aviation or Port authority to oversee Bradley and other state airports? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a plan? What thoughts do you have on enhancing Bradley's role as a regional economic engine and meeting the challenge of its regional rivals such as Stewart Airport in Westchester County and T.F. Green Airport in Rhode Island?
13. Some legislators have expressed interest in allowing low-emission, energy efficient vehicles to use the state's HOV lanes, or converting the HOV lanes to use by trucks only. How difficult would it be to convert the HOV lanes to either of these uses? What are the pros and cons of such a conversion? Would the state have to repay any federal funds used to build and maintain the HOV lanes if they became truck-only lanes?
14. How should DOT balance the use of in-house staff and outside consultants to implement projects and programs?

15. A number of DOT veteran employees have retired in recent years, and the department may lose more in the near future. What steps are you taking to replace that vital experience and institutional memory?
16. What, if any, opportunities exist to take advantage of public private partnerships in advancing the state's transportation agenda?
17. What types of strategic planning does DOT need to do to meet future transportation and mobility needs? For example, how can the department best address the needs of an aging state population and the demands that will place on our transportation systems?
18. The I-95 corridor presents a never-ending set of challenges to mobility and development in Connecticut. Are there new or innovative approaches or ideas you want to bring to DOT to find some meaningful solutions to these problems?

PF:tjo