

**Remarks Regarding SB 800
Transportation Committee**

Good morning Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero and the members of the Transportation Committee.

My name is Michael Nicastro and I am the President & Chief Executive Officer of the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce located at 200 Main Street in Bristol.

I appear before you today in support of senate bill SB 800, AN ACT RESTORING COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE FROM WATERBURY TO HARTFORD and SB 803 AN ACT CONCERNING TRAIN SERVICE ON THE WATERBURY LINE.

As many of you may know, the Central Connecticut Chamber has been a primary voice in promoting the restoration of commuter rail services from Waterbury to Hartford. This has required us to strongly oppose the proposed New Britain/Hartford Busway. To be clear, the Central Chamber leadership and board along with our many affiliates and members see mass transit as a critical and badly needed investment to the state's infrastructure. Without such investment a full return to competitiveness will be far more difficult.

Here are some key points to restoring this rail line:

1. First and foremost as this SB 800 states all funds planned for the busway should be redirected to the rail effort. This includes the findings of the Waterbury Line study completed last year.
2. We must start with a proper rider-ship analysis which on the Busway was only studied as far west as Plainville ignoring the larger population centers of Bristol and Waterbury. Last year, in questioning of former Transportation Commissioner Marie, Senator and co-chair Don DeFronzo asked the commissioner why the recently completed Waterbury Branch Line study was not extended the 25 or so miles north to New Britain as a way to answer the many questions of bus vs. rail.
3. In discussions regarding the potential for a future rail solution it was continually maintained that both options were possible and that the all important right-of-way in New Britain could still handle both. We now know that the entire 60 foot width of right-of-way in the 4.4 mile stretch from New Britain to Newington will be taken by the Busway. In order to allow rail to be restored this ROW must be protected. (MAP)
4. We will have to review the sources of funding which for the Busway has become a circuitous process to understand. A New Starts Full Funding Agreement if received will fund \$275 million but as we now understand the federal government appropriates those funds on their schedule. Right now for the Busway that has amounted to a \$45 million in the 2011 federal budget and another \$45 million in the 2012 federal budget. Neither of those budgets has been enacted and both are still subject to further reduction. We may find it best to step past the New Starts

program altogether as it has proved to be slow, hyper bureaucratic and as we can see pays too slowly.

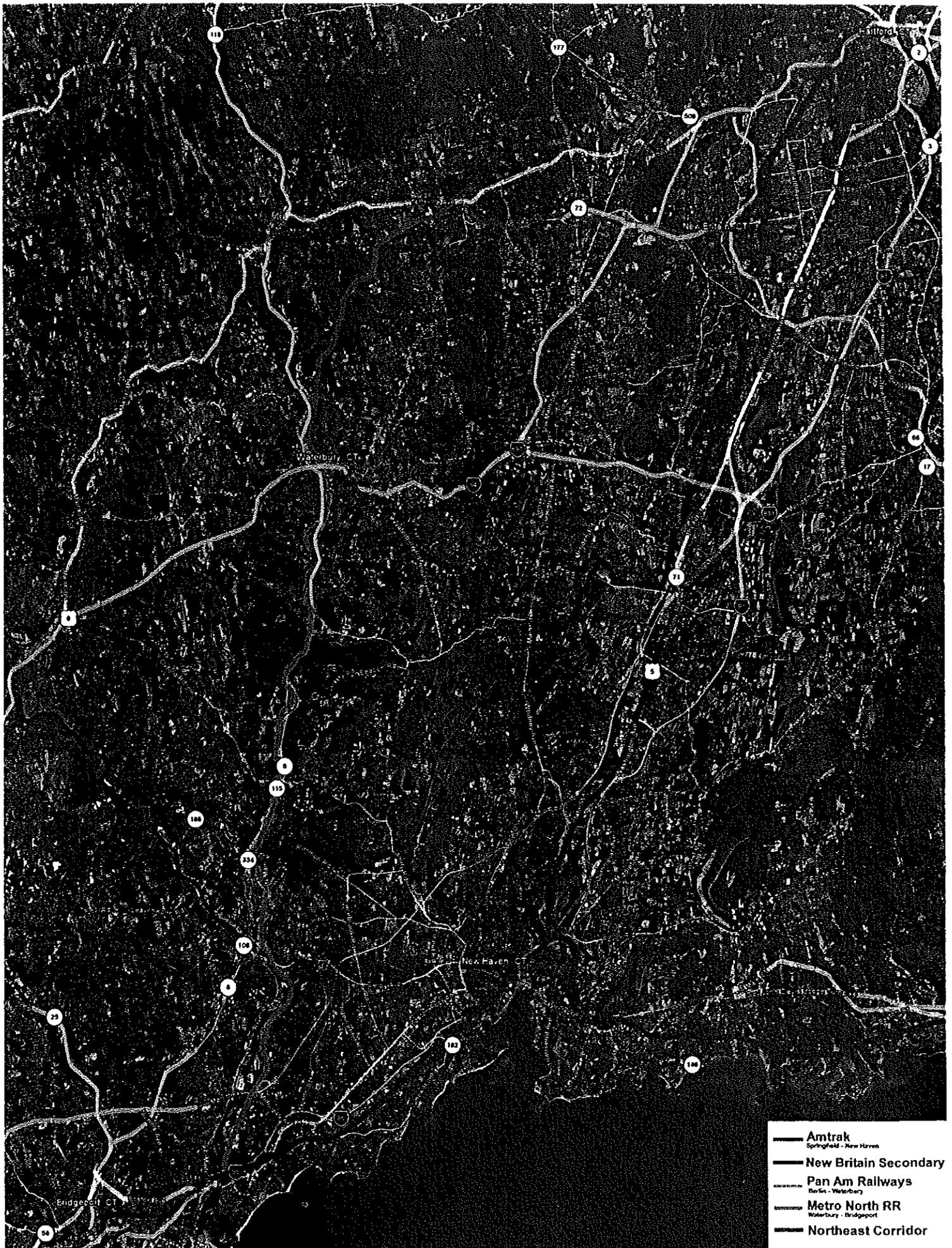
5. If we stay with New Starts then we must re-define our project. There have been all sorts of information and misinformation as to whether or not a New Starts Project can be amended to change mode or for any other reason. In my testimony I have provided you with a copy of a letter from FTA Administrator Rogoff to Congressman Larson answering that question on Chamber's behalf. As the letter states the choice to resubmit is our decision. Other states have done it successfully and so can we. The Houston Metro is an example of a New Starts project that changed twice. It started as light rail changes to a busway and then back to light rail. That project is already underway and awaiting another round of funds.

The Chamber has offered a reasonable and lower cost alternative that would reinstate rail from Waterbury to Hartford. That plan was submitted to the Governor's transition team and received acknowledgement in their report as being worthy of further exploration.

With the financial challenges that we as a state face we need to be judicious and thoughtful in the capital that we allocate for infrastructure. The proper use of existing rail lines can get us there faster and for far less expense as has been proven in Maine and Massachusetts. I point you to the current 30 mile extension of the Downeaster from Portland to Brunswick, Maine. This project already underway has a total price tag of \$35 million and is a joint effort with Pan Am rail who would be our partner on the Waterbury extension as well. I have included a page from the Bowdoin College website that proudly advertises that rail services will be ready for students in the fall of 2012.

In closing, my guess is that others will speak against SB 800 today and you will be regaled with themes of "shovel ready projects", "decades to complete a rail project" and "jobs bills" as well as the unconfirmed belief that "we will have to give the money back" if we don't do the project as defined. I would hope this committee would see beyond this and help to restore a solution that not only mitigates automobile traffic but reconnects more of our residents, opens access to a port city and will take trucks off the road as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you this morning and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding this issue.



- Amtrak
Springfield - New Haven
- New Britain Secondary
- Pan Am Railways
Berlin - Waterbury
- Metro North RR
Waterbury - Bridgeport
- Northeast Corridor



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Transit
Administration

The Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

JAN 29 2010

The Honorable John B. Larson
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Larson:

Thank you for your letter dated December 29 seeking the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) assistance in responding to a question your office received from the Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) regarding whether the New Britain to Hartford Busway project could be changed to a "transit-way" using heavy rail and remain eligible for FTA New Starts funding.

The decision of how best to provide transportation services within a specific geographic region, including the choice between a busway or a heavy rail project, is not made by the Federal Government. Instead, it is the responsibility of local decisionmakers and the project sponsor. Thus, if local decisionmakers wish to redefine the project as heavy rail rather than as a busway, they may do so. This would require additional planning and design work as well as additional environmental review. Once that work is complete, FTA would evaluate the newly defined project to determine if it meets the statutory New Starts criteria and is eligible for New Starts funding.

The New Britain to Hartford Busway project is currently in the final design phase of project development, which is the last phase of development before construction begins. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT), the project sponsor, is seeking a construction grant agreement from FTA later this Spring that would provide \$275.3 million of New Starts funding to the \$572.7 million project.

The Chamber's letter incorrectly states that the New Starts funding for the Busway project has been "secured." The project must first be recommended in the President's budget and receive a construction grant agreement from FTA before the funding can be considered "secured." Even once those actions occur, as you know, the discretionary New Starts funding must be congressionally appropriated before it is available to the project.

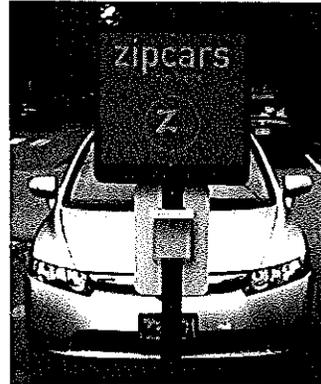
I hope this information is helpful to you. If I can provide further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to call me at (202) 366-4040.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Rogoff

Zipcar

Zipcar, the world's largest car-sharing service, offers a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to the challenges of having a car on campus. The fleet — comprising a Toyota Prius, Honda CRV (a small sport utility vehicle) and a Toyota Tacoma pickup truck — is available for use 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by students, faculty, staff and community members who become Zipcar members. The cars are located on College Street next to the Russwurm African American Center. Visit the website.



Yellow Bike Club

Bowdoin's Yellow Bike Club grants its members access to any of the 50 yellow bikes scattered across campus. An annual fee of \$15 pays for the bikes' maintenance. Membership is open to students, faculty and staff. Visit the website.

Concord Coach Lines

Bus service from Bowdoin to Portland, Boston and beyond continues with some changes. Concord Coach Lines is consolidating its two Brunswick bus stops into one at Maine Street Station; stops at the Mobile station and Druckenmiller Hall will no longer exist. However, in collaboration with the College, Concord Coach Lines will offer pickup at Druckenmiller Hall for holiday and break transportation; watch the campus digest for notices. Visit the website.

Amtrak Downeaster (*Coming in 2012*)

The expansion of Amtrak Downeaster passenger rail service (currently between Boston and Portland) to Brunswick was announced in August 2010. Daily round trips between Boston and Brunswick are expected to begin in fall 2012. In the meantime, passengers can board the train at the Portland station. Visit the website.