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Testimony to Connecticut General Assembly Transportation Committee
February 18, 2011

Amanda Kennedy
Associate Planner
Regional Plan Association
Stamford, CT

My name is Amanda Kennedy and I'm a planner with Regional Plan Association, a non-profit organization with our Connecticut office based in downtown Stamford. We've been around for about 80 years working to advance the sustainable growth of the New York- New Jersey- Connecticut region. Nothing is more important to economic growth as transportation infrastructure and in particular public transit infrastructure.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. You're considering a long list of bills and I'll just touch on a few of them we feel will have particular impact.

We support SB 699 to protect the Special Transportation Fund for transportation.

We strongly support SB 801 to study how to increase transit ridership in Fairfield County. We just did a survey of commuters in Stamford and of the 250 commuters we heard from not one of them used the city bus system, even though many told us that they would like to but that the schedules are either too infrequent or too confusing for people to rely on. I commuted by bus for two years in Stamford, and I can tell you that the problems with our bus system there and elsewhere are not so much routes and frequencies as they are the lack of marketing, dismal waiting areas, and difficulties in finding out when the bus is coming. Simple improvements like correcting route numbers at stops are not currently being made. Stamford has been successful with transit-oriented development around its rail station, but we've really ignored the quality of supporting services that get people to the train and to downtowns and neighborhoods.

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Likewise, we support HB 5954 to require the DOT to respond in writing to the Connecticut Public Transportation Commission's annual report. It's very important that DOT consider the report and that there be some accountability for addressing concerns that are raised.

We also support HB6189 to study a commuter rail station in Niantic. I can see commuter rail enabling additional tourists to visit the town, but my only caution is that Niantic does not have much supporting taxi or bus service, and building a commuter lot at the center of the village would destroy the walkability of the community that residents and tourists are currently drawn to.

We oppose the various bills that would introduce tolls either for trucks only or at borders. Although EZ-pass type tolling will be in Connecticut's future, our tolling strategy must be more comprehensive. I was here last year testifying on this issue and have submitted that written testimony again.

Lastly, we strongly oppose bill 800 to sweep busway funds for efforts to restore commuter rail between Waterbury and Hartford. Of course we support the long-term effort to extend our commuter rail system, but the Busway will be built and running by 2014, is 80% funded by the federal government, and will provide far superior service to the region than commuter rail, which has a low probability of receiving federal funding in the near future. RPA considers the busway a critical part of the Capitol Region's growth plan, linking riders to the New Haven-Springfield Commuter Rail at junctions in both Newington and Hartford, and maintaining congestion-free access to jobs in downtown Hartford. I've submitted along with my written testimony a fact sheet on the busway that we put together over a year ago, and on the back you'll see a map of all the routes that will take advantage of the busway. You can see how the busway allows frequent service to the major destinations of the region while still providing the benefits of fixed-route service. I look forward to the time when Hartford has one of the country's first modern busway systems up and running.

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Testimony to Connecticut General Assembly Transportation Committee
March 12, 2010

Amanda Kennedy
Associate Planner
Regional Plan Association
Stamford, CT

Thank you for providing an opportunity to speak on the border toll concept. My name is Amanda Kennedy and I am a planner with the Stamford office of Regional Plan Association, a tri-state organization focused on advancing the region's economy and protecting our environment and quality of life. We at RPA felt it was important to come up today to speak on this issue because although we are opposed to introducing border tolls, the goal of raising revenue for transportation investment is tremendously important for the future health of Connecticut and of the region. In the last twelve months, there have been a couple of really valuable documents produced on the state of Connecticut's transportation finances—Commissioner Marie's recently released capital plan lists almost \$4 billion in unfunded road and transit projects, which doesn't even include crucial initiatives such as the New Haven Springfield Commuter Rail or addressing the future of the Aetna viaduct. It's clear that Connecticut will need to establish a more diverse and stable revenue source than the existing gas tax. The second valuable document is the Tolling Study prepared last year by Cambridge Systematics for the TSB, which analyzes a menu of options that could affect revenues and congestion throughout the state.

It's disappointing that this committee has selected border tolls from that menu as the option to pursue. Border tolls would disproportionately impact the residents of border communities, discourage the growth of interstate regional economies, and create congestion and deterioration of local roads while doing nothing to solve congestion on our highways. In my written testimony I am submitting two maps showing the locations of commuters to Hartford, and commuters to Stamford. Both employment centers draw workers from out of state, and businesses count on the

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ability to reach outside of Connecticut's borders for skilled workers. Border tolls at Enfield work against efforts to boost a Hartford/Springfield Knowledge Corridor that will ultimately be tied by rail. Stamford has been very successful at attracting businesses from Westchester County, who know that they'll be able to keep their workforces if they move across the border to Connecticut. A \$3 toll would make such a move less attractive and slow the momentum of a major locus of economic growth for the state.

I'm asking this committee to instead focus on road pricing strategies that will more fairly distribute the burden of paying for our transportation system, and that will do more to improve highway congestion and reduce overall vehicle miles traveled. A VMT charge that works in place of or alongside the gas tax would incentive personal reductions in VMT, and as we transition away from gasoline as a motor vehicle fuel, would provide a steadier source of revenue. Road pricing by mile is not "pie-in-the-sky": It has been successfully demonstrated both in Oregon and in Germany, and Connecticut will ultimately need to pursue such a comprehensive strategy.

In lieu of full VMT pricing, we ask that this committee consider implementing variable tolls on our most congested highways, starting with the Merritt Parkway and I-95 in Fairfield County. Tolling these roads at times of peak usage would reduce congestion and shorten travel times for users who choose to drive at peak times. This option would produce considerable revenue that could pay for bus, rail, and pedestrian improvements for our coastal communities that can help us transition further from a car-dependent environment, as well as creating revenue that supports ongoing maintenance and capital projects elsewhere in the state. We also believe that drivers will be willing to pay for a roadway that is less likely to be jammed for hours any day of the week.

In closing, I need to point out that whatever tolling strategy we select will only be a part of the solution to financing transportation: we need to be better at prioritizing where we spend our transportation dollars, determine what projects are most important, and develop a system for funding them that is sustainable and equitable.

NEW BRITAIN-HARTFORD BUSWAY Fact Sheet

Achieving a Capital West Transitway

This year, Connecticut expects to be granted federal funding to build an exclusive bus-only route to improve transit access in Hartford's most congested corridor. Riders headed to downtown Hartford and to suburban destinations outside of Hartford, especially to New Britain, Bristol, Westfarms Mall, and the UConn Health Center will benefit. Construction will begin later this year with buses running in 2013.

Bus Service Plan (Map on reverse)

The draft service plan currently being developed for the project proposes the following new or improved bus routes (all frequencies stated are peak hour):

- A New Britain to Hartford bus every 6 minutes
- A Bristol to Hartford bus every 12 minutes, extending existing commuter bus service to downtown Bristol, and improving speeds and frequencies
- A bus every 18 minutes to Corbins Corner departmenting the busway at Elmwood and linking Westfarms Mall with both Hartford and New Britain
- A bus every 18 minutes to UConn Health Center in Farmington via Elmwood and Corbins Corner
- Express buses between downtown Hartford, Waterbury, and Cheshire every 30 minutes, bypassing congestion on I-84, and skipping local stops.
- Circulator buses connecting riders to Central Connecticut State University, Bishop's Corner and West Hartford Center, and Asylum Hill and Hartford Hospital.

The service plan has been designed to simplify scheduling and reduce waiting time at key locations: buses will depart every 12 minutes from Bristol, 9 from Corbins Corner, 6 from New Britain, and every 3 minutes from Elmwood. Existing local routes will stop at points

Quick Facts

- 9.4 miles
- Regional links to West Hartford, Farmington, Bristol, and Waterbury
- Attracts 5,000 new daily riders
- 80% federal funding
- Complete in 2013

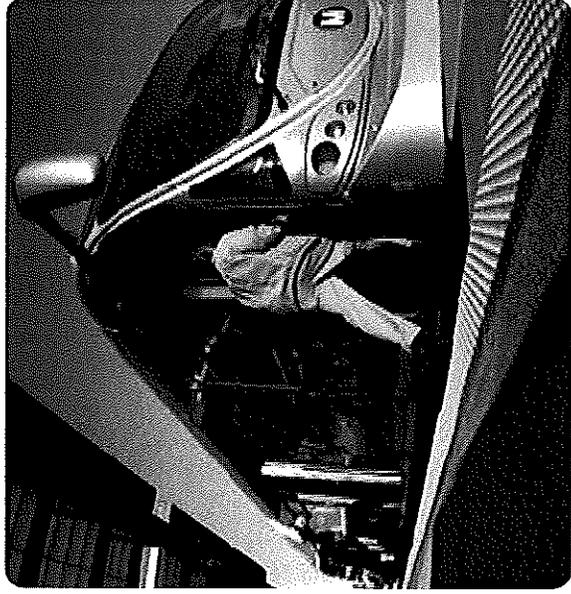
along the busway to enable transfers to the new express services. About 11,000 existing bus riders will enjoy better bus service, and the new and enhanced routes will attract approximately 5,000 new riders, increasing bus ridership in the Hartford region by 14% and taking thousands of cars off the area's roads.

Costs and Funding

The \$572 million price tag includes construction of the 9.4 mile busway route, reconstruction of bridges and overpasses, a new access road for Amtrak, stations, rapid transit and standard buses, a bike path from New Britain to Newington, and a 10% contingency for cost overruns. New Starts funding of \$267 million and \$193 million from other federal sources will cover 80% of the cost of the project. In order to accept the federal New Starts funding and build the busway, Connecticut will have to commit to an overall state match of \$113 million for the busway, about \$11 million of which has already been spent on design and land acquisition, and to fund \$14 million in annual operating costs. Construction of the busway will create 4,000 jobs between now and 2013.

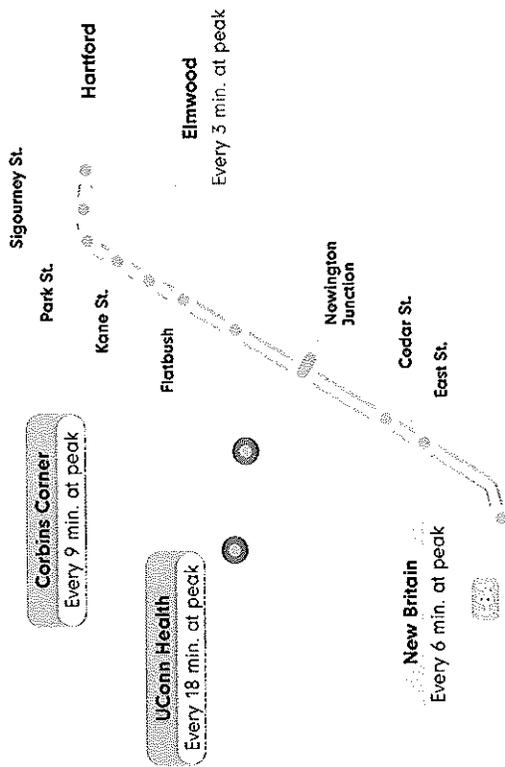
Rail/Busway Operation Issues

The northern portion of the busway will run alongside existing Amtrak service and will operate alongside the proposed New Haven/Hartford/Springfield commuter rail. Options for restoring rail service from Bristol to Hartford or New York City include connecting via Waterbury to existing Metro-North service, or by running passenger service on a spur that connects New Britain to the New Haven/Springfield line at Berlin. Either option will require a thorough study of ridership and costs. A planning process that requests federal funding will require environmental reviews and an alternatives analysis that will identify the appropriate transit investment for the corridor.



NEW BRITAIN-HARTFORD BUSWAY Proposed Service

To Springfield



- busway and commuter rail stations
- off-busway destinations

Bristol Shuttle
Every 12 min. at peak

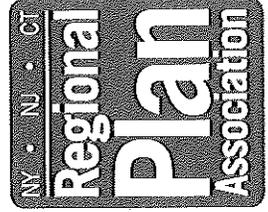
Milidale Park and Ride
Every 30 min. at peak

Southington Park and Ride
Every 30 min. at peak

Waterbury Express
Every 30 min. at peak

Waterbury Park and Ride
Every 30 min. at peak

Cheshire Express
Every 18 min. at peak



To New Haven