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QUESTIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER NOMINEE

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COMMISSIONER OF TRANSPORTATION (CGS §§ 13b-3, 13b-4)

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; 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.

NOMINEE QUESTIONS

General Questions

1. You kicked off a recent transportation forum in the capitol by saying that the Department of Transportation (DOT) is moving from an 80/20 split between highways and other transportation modes to one closer to 50/50. What are you doing to effect this change? How and when will it become evident to residents? How long will it take before the transition is complete? Do you foresee commuters switching from cars to public transit? What percentage of commuters would have to switch to public transit to make the most efficient use of the state's highways and transit systems?
2. The state's precarious fiscal situation and continued uncertainty about a successor to the federal transportation funding law means resources may be scarce for many DOT projects. How is the department determining which projects to fund first?
3. 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?
4. According to a recent [report](#), Connecticut ranks 32nd nationally in the overall condition of its bridges (with #1 being the worst). The report found that one of every 11 bridges that state motorists drive over each day is likely to be deteriorating to some degree, and that 9.2% of the bridges are rated structurally deficient, meaning they require significant maintenance, rehabilitation, or replacement. What is DOT doing to address this? How much money will it cost and how long will it take? Where will the money come from?
5. A number of veteran DOT employees have retired in recent years. What steps are you taking to replace that vital experience and institutional memory?

6. Does the loss of key DOT personnel mean the department must rely more strongly on consultants? How should DOT balance the use of in-house staff and outside consultants to implement projects and programs?
7. What, if any, opportunities exist to take advantage of public-private partnerships in advancing the state's transportation agenda?
8. 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 population and the resulting demands on our transportation systems? How would this mesh with the department's goal of a 50/50 highway/public transit split?

Highways and Roads

9. 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?
10. There has been some confusion about federal attitudes on tolling existing highways. What is your understanding of where and when the federal government will allow tolling of existing roadways, and what restrictions it would impose?
11. Revenue from the State Transportation Fund is expected to decline for several reasons, including increased reliance on energy efficient vehicles, which will result in a 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?
12. What is the status of the renovation and rehabilitation of the state's service areas? Is the work on schedule? Are you satisfied with the progress that has been made? In what ways will these areas help promote tourism in Connecticut?

13. The governor has proposed a bill to allow DOT to award “design build” highway construction contracts. Why is this necessary? What will passage of the bill mean for the department?
14. 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 federal funds used to build and maintain the HOV lanes if they became truck-only lanes?

Rail

15. According to the Metro North Commuter Council’s 2011 annual report, poor communication between Metro-North and DOT and Metro-North commuters is the single biggest issue riders face. What is DOT doing to improve the lines of communication with commuters?
16. The lack of parking at Metro North train stations is a perennial problem for the line’s commuters. What is DOT doing to improve parking at these stations?
17. Please bring us up to date on the introduction into service of the M-8 cars. How many have been delivered? When should the last cars be placed in service? To what do you attribute delays in entering the cars in service?
18. Please briefly describe the funding and planning 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 it come from? What improvements would have to be foregone if additional funding is not available?
19. What is the department doing to maintain and expand the state’s freight rail system?

Bus Service

20. The Hartford-New Britain Busway, which recently received Department of Energy and Environmental Protection approval for an inland-wetlands permit, has been criticized by some as an unnecessary diversion of money and resources from other state priorities, particularly expanded rail service. How do you respond to this criticism? How does the plan to rebuild the I-84 viaduct in Hartford affect planning for the busway? When should people first see the benefits of the busway?
21. What is DOT doing to expand commuter bus service in the state, and to better connect existing service routes?

Aviation and Ports

22. Last year, the legislature created a quasi-public authority to develop and operate Bradley International Airport and the state's five other general aviation airports, but did not transfer DOT's airport related statutory powers, duties, and functions. Instead, it required DOT to transfer them to the authority via a memorandum of understanding. Which powers, duties, and functions has DOT transferred to the authority? Which remain outstanding? What are the issues affecting the transfer? How long will it take to complete the transfer?
23. Can the aviation authority generate enough revenue to cover its operating costs and debts and still finance major capital improvements?
24. Clearly, airports rely on other modes of transportation to help people and goods get to and from the airports. How will DOT insure that those modes under its control facilitate that movement?
25. Last December, the governor selected a consultant to recommend ways that Connecticut can make better use of its three deep-water ports. How is this effort different from earlier attempts to improve these ports and further the state's economic development? What are some of the institutional, regulatory, and financial barriers facing port development?

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