

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Testimony of Steven Higashide, Senior Planner/Connecticut Coordinator Connecticut General Assembly, Planning & Development Committee Public Hearing February 13, 2013

Good morning. My name is Steven Higashide and I am the senior planner and Connecticut coordinator for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a nonprofit transportation watchdog group that works in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on **SB 2, "An Act Concerning Smart Growth and Job Creation."** Tri-State believes it is appropriate for Connecticut to adopt a statewide transit-oriented development policy that aligns state agencies and programs – similar to the way DECD's brownfields program has been revamped to prioritize TODs – to invest in places that wish to develop around transit. We are encouraged by Governor Malloy's creation of a TOD interagency task force and look forward to reviewing the recommendations of that task force.

I would also like to comment on **HB 5966, "An Act Authorizing Fees in Lieu of Sidewalk Construction."** Authorizing sidewalk in-lieu fees will give municipalities an important tool to incentivize construction of pedestrian infrastructure in downtowns and other areas where it is needed most. Rather than requiring developers to build sidewalks in areas without proper connections, municipalities can use in-lieu fees to close high-priority gaps in their sidewalk networks.

However, we would caution against language that could allow developers to reduce the amount of public benefit that is provided. For example:

- HB 5966 mandates that the in-lieu fee should not exceed the estimated cost of installing sidewalks and sets no minimum fee amount. It would make more sense for the *minimum* fee to be set equal to the estimated cost of installing sidewalks.
- HB 5966 allows for municipalities to set reduced fees upon a two-thirds vote of the planning commission. We do not feel such incentives are necessary. Providing the developer with the opportunity to forego building and maintaining sidewalks on his or her property should be incentive enough.

Thank you.