



BILL FINCH
Mayor

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT
999 BROAD STREET
BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT 06604
TELEPHONE (203) 576-7201
FAX (203) 576-3913

TESTIMONY

**Transportation Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
Public Hearing, February 4, 2013
SB 641, "An Act Concerning Consultation between the Department
of Transportation and Regional Planning Agencies Prior to
Commencement of Certain Infrastructure Projects"**

**Provided by: David M. Kooris, Director of the Office of Planning and
Economic Development for the City of Bridgeport**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today on this important bill.

The roads, canals, railroads, and highways that fueled the growth of this and other states in the 18th, 19th, and 20th Centuries were designed to achieve an overarching goal: to add long-term value to the communities that they linked. This bill brings us a step closer to ensuring that the infrastructure investments we make today prepare Connecticut's towns and cities for the 21st Century and beyond.

We know several things to be true:

We know that demographic shifts in our state including the rise of young professionals, empty nesters, and immigrant households point to growing demand for housing options that are not prevalent in this state, currently dominated by single-family housing stock.

We know that companies are seeking environments that foster innovation, enable spontaneous interaction between workers on the sidewalk, create opportunities for collaboration at the corner coffee shop, and provide fast and reliable connection to New York City and other metropolitan centers along the Northeast Corridor.

We know that transportation costs are rising and will continue to do so as fuel becomes increasingly difficult to extract, that individuals are looking for alternatives to long daily commutes alone in a car, and that emissions reductions are essential to prevent the most significant impacts of climate change, especially in a coastal state.

As a state that has not experienced net job growth for decades, one that has struggled to retain young professionals and the start-ups that they create, and one that is facing significant budget and revenue challenges, Connecticut cannot afford to spend money on infrastructure without ensuring that it will constitute an investment in our ability to prosper in the context of these truths.

This bill will empower our regional planning organizations to assess transportation projects based on their economic impacts, ensuring a strong connection between our state's spending on infrastructure and these investments' return for our communities.

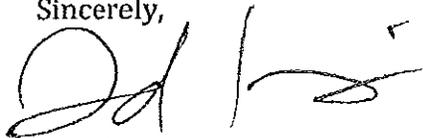
The responsibility, though, must not rest solely on the Department of Transportation and the regions. Given that land use plans and zoning are controlled by the municipality, this analysis would serve to act as a checkpoint, ensuring that the multiple levels of government with a role in economic development are aligning their policies towards this common goal.

Too often, we have seen road projects designed purely for throughput, capacity, and speed, stifling communities' goals for walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods along them. Too often, we have seen train stations designed for parking and an absence of local zoning for transit-oriented development despite the opportunities for sustainable communities in our state. And too often, we have seen expensive highway projects designed to save a few minutes for commuters elevated above those that would create employment growth and tax base in the nearby downtown those commuters could be destined to.

Bridgeport has worked aggressively to rezone for growth and to identify transportation projects that would catalyze the redevelopment of vacant brownfields, provide necessary employment and taxes, and increase the housing stock of southwestern Connecticut. These transportation projects are the type that should be prioritized because of the economic return that they will generate.

This bill is one of several steps that must be taken to harness investment and policies across all levels of government for the benefit of our state's economy and the prosperity of our communities. We cannot afford to spend on transportation projects that are not coordinated with local zoning to help realize the 21st Century housing and employment needs of Connecticut's communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Kooris', written in a cursive style.

David Kooris