

Economic Development Administration
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TESTIMONY ON SB 33
Planning & Development Committee
FEBRUARY 24, 2014

Representative Rojas, Senator Osten, members of the Planning & Development Committee, I would like to testify on SB 33, "AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NEW HAVEN REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY," which would create a new development entity to renovate Union Station, build a new train station parking garage, and promote transit-oriented, mixed-use redevelopment in New Haven. Every year, millions of people move through Union Station on their way to and from Amtrak, MetroNorth, ShoreLine East trains.

Over the past few decades, demand for its transit services has exploded, such that Union Station is now at least the 11th busiest train station in the country, and will move into the top 10 once the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield Line begins service in 2016.

Despite this surge in use, investment in the station and its environs has lagged:

- While the state and city remodeled the station beginning in the 1980s, we have done no significant work since then;
- While the state and city built the adjacent parking garage in the 1990s, demand for parking has increased to the point that we now have a 450-person waiting list for monthly parking spaces; and
- While New Haven is experiencing huge growth in mixed-use development interest in other parts of the city, development in the Union Station area has languished due to our inability to leverage its revenues to promote transit-oriented development in and around it.

Thankfully, through our partnership with the state, we've worked with various state agencies to design an effective, durable, and truly collaborative mechanism to upgrade our train station and position New Haven, and our region, for economic growth. Last year, we worked together on a plan ("the TOD plan", at <http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/EconomicDevelopment/Projects/ReadMore.asp?ID={E7E8358E-D9A8-4EBE-AD5B-2DE4D6D4BF35}>) that identifies what we need to do and how we need to do it.

Simply put, it proposes creating a new Union Station governance and financing structure, to be called the "New Haven Region Development Authority" ("the Authority"). In addition to operating the train station on an ongoing basis, this Authority would finance, at no cost to the state:

- The expansion, remodeling, and remerchandising of Union Station;
- The construction of additional transit-oriented development along Union Avenue, including a new parking facility with attendant mixed-use space; and
- The development of new mixed-use housing and commercial projects in New Haven's Hill-to-Downtown neighborhood, creating thousands of jobs and leveraging billions of dollars in private investment.

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This past month, we began meeting and discussing with members of the Governor's administration how to draft legislative language to create this shared entity. While we consider the legislation before you a good first step, we believe that it leaves unclear or unresolved certain important issues.

For instance, we believe it's absolutely critical for the legislation to state explicitly that the primary purpose for creating the Authority is to expand Union Station and implement the TOD plan. Similarly, we believe that, given the many TOD projects that New Haven already is in the process of pursuing in and around Union Station, what New Haven now needs most in an Authority is a collaborative partner that will work with us to help structure and finance these projects.

For reference purposes, I've attached a copy of the legislation that we support and believe most effectively delivers on our shared goals.

As the bill before you progresses, we look forward to working with you, Governor Malloy, and members of his administration to produce legislation that reflects our shared vision of what Union Station, New Haven, and transit-oriented development in Connecticut itself can and should be.

Thank you very much for your consideration; I'd be happy to answer any questions that you might have.