

Statement of James P. Redeker
Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
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Good Afternoon Committee Chairs Looney and Janowski, and distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee.

I am honored to appear before you today. I am particularly grateful to Governor Malloy for nominating me to the position of Commissioner of the Department of Transportation and for his unwavering advocacy and support.

I'd like to start by recognizing the people of the Connecticut DOT. Connecticut is served by the most dedicated, selfless team of transportation professionals that I have ever met. The day after Governor Malloy announced my appointment, Connecticut was hit with a hurricane. That was followed by two of the worst winter storm seasons in Connecticut's history and another devastating hurricane. And just this week, Connecticut tackled a blizzard across the state. Each time, in record time, the state highways, transit services and rail lines were open for business and ready to serve our customers. Last year, due to our own forward planning, we came to the aid of cities and towns across the state that ran out of critical salt supplies. This year, we offered mutual aid to New York by sending 22 crew members with three snow blowers and snow plows to assist in the Buffalo area.

In each of these efforts, I applaud the total commitment of our team to customer service and I honor the personal and family sacrifices they make to the people of Connecticut. They are the "heroes" of the Department, and I consider it an extraordinary privilege to serve as their Commissioner.

When I sat before you in 2012, I outlined seven "Core Values" that I pledged would drive everything we do at DOT going forward. I committed to improve how we communicate with stakeholders, to deliver excellent customer service, to embrace interagency and private sector partnerships, to measure and report on our performance with full transparency, and to employ innovation and process improvement in all that we do. I believe the DOT has advanced each of these Core Values. In doing so, we have advanced the mission of the DOT: to provide a safe and efficient transportation network that improves the quality of life and promotes economic vitality for the State and the region. We have done this while saving time and money that enables us to deliver more projects and service to the state, and the residents of Connecticut.

Over the last four years, we have used these "Core Values" as the basis for several new and innovative best practices that are transforming the operational direction and culture of this agency. I am proud to report that we have created an agency-wide effort that is redefining the "norm" at DOT as a team that is committed to innovation and positive change. I believe we can no longer be labeled as reactive and stodgy. The DOT team is only too happy to break the old mold by making a wholesale change in the way we do business.

This is why I applaud Governor Malloy for laying out his vision for a 21st Century transportation system - a forward-thinking plan that places the focus on strategic, long-term solutions to ensure Connecticut's economic vitality and competitiveness for generations to come.

Much of our multimodal system is obsolete, some of it outright deficient, and in need of an upgrade. One thing is certain -- the solution to this problem does not include temporary, short-term fixes that, in a decade, will bring us back to the same place we are right now.

We can only kick the can down the road for so long. Governor Malloy has decided that Connecticut must have the tough but necessary conversations about our vision and priorities, and how we will fund that vision. We must fix a problem that is long-overdue for a solution.

At DOT, we are ready and able to take the lead to carry out Governor Malloy's plan. We will be both planners and implementers of an ambitious transportation program. This requires having the team and systems in place to act as responsible, transparent and responsive stewards of taxpayer dollars while being flexible and addressing challenges in creative ways that ensure our success.

At DOT, everyone from the Commissioner to engineers to maintainers is setting the performance bar higher to provide what our customers need in a new ways.

We understand that we must move away from temporary fixes and spot repairs. Our new approach must be mindful of that our actions and investments today will affect us, our children and grandchildren 30, 40 and 50 years down the road.

We will do this by deploying creative and proven innovations to bring Connecticut's multimodal system into the 21st Century to the point where we will be known as a "best-in-class" national model.

Many of these innovations help us reduce the time it takes to deliver our projects to our customers. When we deliver quality work more quickly, we increase capacity to perform because we have reduced costs and created savings to be used for other projects. The bottom line is we enhance safety and convenience across all areas of our transportation network through greater efficiency.

I'd like to mention a few examples of DOT's consistent innovation. We continuously look for better methods to deliver major infrastructure projects on budget and ahead of schedule while we minimize impacts to the public, traffic, local businesses and communities.

We are using an engineering and construction process known as ABC, Accelerated Bridge Construction, in which the new bridges are built adjacent to the old ones and are then lifted into place when ready. Understanding the inconvenience that large-scale construction projects can cause for residents and travelers on our roads, we began employing ABC principles as a creative approach to finish these projects ahead of schedule and with as little interruption as possible to the area vehicular traffic. To date, we have successfully utilized ABC on several bridge replacement projects. The most notable was the replacement of two bridges on Interstate 84 in Southington -- a project done in one weekend and completed well ahead of schedule. We also utilized accelerated bridge construction for the replacement of bridges on Route 17 in Middletown, Route 111 in Monroe, and on Route 17A in Portland. By employing this rapid construction technique, DOT has virtually eliminated what would have been many months or even years of traffic disruptions and congestion on Interstate 84 and other major roadways.

Design-build is another alternative process that allows us to cut out steps in project delivery schedules to reduce costs and time while preserving quality. We are essentially delivering the same quality project in a shorter timespan at a competitive price. The Department's first Design-Build project is planned for a \$40 million bridge replacement project on Route 8 in Bridgeport.

Our success using alternative project delivery such as ABC and Design-Build are the first steps in setting the standard for future projects. These tools, added to our existing capabilities, allow DOT to produce the best product and save time and money for all of our stakeholders.

There are also some additional major projects from this year worth mentioning.

- The \$1.96 billion Q Bridge program is in its 14th year of construction and nearing completion. We opened the first half of the bridge two years ago and expect to open the second span in late 2015, still significantly under budget and ahead of schedule.
- The project to widen I84 in Waterbury is finally underway due to funding that was made available from projects being delivered under budget.
- The project to remove the last remaining bottleneck on I95 in Norwalk was completed 5 months ahead of schedule.
- CTfastrak went from a plan to reality in just two years. I invite all of you to the ribbon-cutting event on March 27 this year.
- We implemented a completely new bus radio system in partnership with the State Police, saving millions of dollars compared to implementing the system on our own.
- We added half-hourly, all day and all weekend service on the New Haven Line for the first time in its history.
- We will receive delivery of all 405 new M8 rail cars by the first quarter of 2015. Customers love the new cars, and they are performing excellently.
- We opened new train stations in West Haven and Westbrook.
- We upgraded overhead wire and power supply projects across the New Haven Line.
- We finished the signalization of the Danbury Branch and added new service for the first time in decades.
- Construction has begun on the new Hartford Line service between New Haven and Springfield, Massachusetts.
- We implemented real-time variable message signs on our interstate highway message boards.
- We paved 314 two-lane miles of roadway.
- We are also working to enhance safety on many of primary and secondary state roads by installing shoulder and center-line rumble strips.
- Almost all Service Plazas across the state have been rebuilt and opened as part of a major public/private partnership.
- New Master Municipal Agreements have simplified and accelerated agreements with municipalities across the state.
- Traffic permits are now delivered within months instead of years.
- We were the only state to receive federal funds for "distracted driving" programs, and that has enabled us to be in almost 100 high schools with programs aimed at safe driving.
- We are implementing a statewide automation of crash data in partnership with the State Police and UConn.
- And we have engaged in almost 50 LEAN initiatives to streamline our processes.

There is much progress to point to. But the Governor is launching a game-changing vision for transportation in Connecticut:

- A vision that will transform the economy, if not the entire transportation landscape across the state.
- A vision that will identify a “Best-in-Class” transportation system.
- And a vision that will necessitate a “Best-in-Class” DOT to deliver and sustain extraordinary service.

An opportunity to shape a vision for the Connecticut’s statewide transportation system comes once in a career. There has never been a plan for transportation in Connecticut that looks forward 30 years with the goal of driving the future. Plans for decades have not come close to restoring our system to a state-of-good repair. Those plans reflected only what the DOT thought it could do with limited resources.

Providing a blueprint for a world-class, highly functioning transit and highway system will require a stakeholder process that solicits input from residents and businesses about what works and what doesn’t in our multi-modal system. Giving all stakeholders a direct role in the vision will ensure that Connecticut is a more competitive, sustainable and livable state.

In the end, this is a plan of the people, not the DOT. Once the vision is established, it is ultimately the responsibility of the DOT to deliver what the people of Connecticut want us to do. I assure you that we are taking a balanced approach to building our team and the capacity to carry out the Governor’s vision of developing a “best-in-class” multimodal system.

We have experienced some solid success at DOT over the past four years, but this is only the beginning. I look forward to rolling up our sleeves with Governor Malloy, the members of the General Assembly and all of DOT’s stakeholders to craft a vision, and to continue carrying out our mission of delivering a safe, efficient and modern transportation system for the people of Connecticut.