



Catherine H. Smith
Commissioner

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
3/6/15

**RE: HB 6851: AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT TRANSIT CORRIDOR
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

Senator Osten, Representative Miller, Senator Linares, Representative Aman and members of the Planning and Development Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 6851: An Act Establishing the Connecticut Transit Corridor Development Authority.

As you are aware, our mission at the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is to increase the state's economic competitiveness. We do this by attracting and retaining businesses and jobs, revitalizing neighborhoods and communities, and preserving and promoting cultural and tourism assets.

In our view, HB 6851 is an important new economic development proposal. The bill establishes a quasi-public CT Transit Corridor Development Authority (TCDA) to focus on transit-oriented development projects within a half-mile radius of any transit station in Connecticut. The TCDA seeks to leverage significant statewide transportation initiatives, including the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield line, CTfastrak, Metro-North, and Shore Line East to facilitate transit-oriented development in the state. The authority's focus will be on working with municipalities, regional organizations, and state agencies – such as DECD – to concentrate housing, parking, cultural and commercial development near transit stops to improve the quality of life and economies of our cities and towns. We believe that transit-oriented development, centered around existing and planned transit nodes, represents a unique opportunity to revitalize Connecticut's cities and downtowns in a sustainable, more environmentally-friendly manner – one which also will ease congestion along our highways.

In most of DECD's programs, we proactively emphasize transit-oriented development (and other statewide priorities such as the creation of affordable housing) in evaluating competitive grant and loan applications. In 2014, the Malloy Administration awarded brownfield funding to significant potential TOD projects in Berlin, Bridgeport, Enfield, Meriden, New Britain, Norwalk, Stratford, Windsor and Windsor Locks. DECD is also partnering with the Town of Newington to demolish, remediate and redevelop the long-derelict National Welding site at the Cedar Street CTfastrak station, which the Hartford Courant called the "town's biggest eyesore."



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Last year, the State of Connecticut made a historic investment in TOD with the creation of a new \$15 million Transit Oriented Development Pre-Development and Acquisition Fund, to which our partner, LISC, is contributing \$13 million. The fund was established to provide financing to developers to assist them in carrying out projects along the CTfastrak and New Haven-Hartford-Springfield (NHHS) transit corridors. The proposed TCDA aims to build upon that new fund and the work of the Governor's interagency TOD Task Force by further facilitating transit-oriented development along the state's key transit assets.

As we have seen from the Capitol Region Development Authority (CRDA), on whose board I sit, a vehicle that brings together private sector, local community leaders, and the state can be a very successful way to spur development near transit in our downtowns. We believe this model, in the form of the proposed TCDA, can be leveraged to support development at our new transportation nodes.

We at DECD look forward to working closely with the TCDA to grow jobs and improve the livability of our communities. Thanks in advance for your consideration of this important new initiative.