

*TESTIMONY TO THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
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Testimony Supporting SB 19

AN ACT ESTABLISHING
THE TRANSIT CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and members of the Committee, I am Gian-Carl Casa, Undersecretary for Legislative Affairs at the Office of Policy and Management. I thank you for the opportunity to discuss SB 19, Governor Malloy's proposal to establish a quasi-public Transit Corridor Development Assistance Authority (TCDA) to work with communities that want its help in undertaking transit-oriented development projects (TOD) near transit stations.

Municipalities are asking you for the kind of help they can get from TCDA.

- At least fourteen mayors and first selectman are expected to either appear before you today or submit testimony in support of this bill. They come from larger cities like Waterbury and New Britain, mid-sized communities such as East Hartford and Meriden and smaller towns like Glastonbury and North Haven. They are both Democrats and Republicans. The support is bi-partisan and it is from the ground up.
- This bill is supported by groups representing municipalities and officials from across the state, the CT Conference of Municipalities (CCM), Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, the CT Chapter of the American Planning Association and the Corridor Advisory Committee for CTFastTrack and Hartford Rail Service.

TCDA is Municipally Friendly

They are here today because TCDA's charge will be to help communities do projects they want – the parameters of the projects will be defined by agreement between the Authority and the town.

TOD projects are often complex, involving several properties and property owners, and may require work such as pollution clean-up. Such projects sometimes are difficult for local governments to tackle on their own. They may not have staff with that kind of expertise.

- **TCDA does not act without a memorandum of agreement signed by the municipal CEO and approved by its legislative body. The agreement lays out what the Authority will do, mutual rights and responsibilities, the number of public hearings to be held about the project, the properties that would be affected, financial matters, etc.**
- **The municipal CEO sits on the board and votes.**
- **TCDA must follow all local planning and zoning rules for private and municipal property, just as the law presently requires.**

- TCDAAs will have no independent bonding authority. It will not have authority for eminent domain.
- TCDAAs must take into account comments by the regional council of governments, and the COG's director is an ad hoc member of the board.

Why TCDAAs?

Connecticut has long talked about sustainable patterns of development -- encouraging development where the infrastructure to support it exists, rather than in undeveloped greenspaces. We have also spoken much about "transit-oriented development" which concentrates housing, parking, cultural and commercial development near transit stops -- reducing the need for travel by car and creating "walkable and livable" areas.

But that development has not occurred quickly enough. Connecticut is at the beginning of a major new effort to upgrade transportation infrastructure, and this proposal will help ensure that development near transit stations occurs more quickly and in concert with statewide transportation initiatives such as the new rail line between New Haven-Hartford-Springfield, CTfastrak and the existing rail lines such as New Haven Line, Shore Line East, and branch lines.

Why A Quasi Public Entity?

A quasi-public agency is the best entity to do this because it can bridge divides between agencies and levels of government. In addition, a quasi-public agency is better able to fund itself with revenue it generates as part of the projects it manages, better able to work quickly and with the kind of flexibility necessary to put together deals.

- TCDAAs will not be an entity that will act on its own, but will coordinate with the municipalities within which the development occurs along with regional organizations, the state departments of Economic and Community Development, Housing, Transportation and the Office of Policy and Management.
- Existing agencies have different charges and responsibilities and would not be able to singularly focus on TOD in the same way TCDAAs would be able to do. DOT's responsibility is to build and manage transportation systems. On the other end of the spectrum, DECD deals exclusively with the latter but not the former. The Department of Housing has its own specific focus.
- TCDAAs will have extensive reporting responsibilities, including annual financial audits, annual reports to the Governor and General Assembly

Connecticut has had a successful history with using quasi-public agencies to accomplish statewide priorities. The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, Connecticut Innovations, Inc. and CRDA are examples of the way in which a focused effort can help us meet our shared goals. Please note that most of the provisions of the bill were drawn from existing statutes that created the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA). We are not breaking new ground with this proposal -- just extending that successful model to transit nodes across the state.

Governance

TCDAA will be governed by a board of directors comprising five gubernatorial appointments and six legislative appointments. The municipal CEO of the town in which a project is planned is an ad hoc voting member, and there are ad hoc nonvoting memberships for (i) the executive director of the regional council of governments or planning organization of the region in which a project is planned, and (ii) a representative of the minority community to be appointed by the legislative body of the municipality in which a project is planned.

As it gets up-and-running, TCDAA will be assisted by the staff at the Capitol Region Development Authority. There is \$250,000 in the proposed budget for new staff at TCDAA, which is sufficient for now. Ultimately, TCDAA will be self-supported by the revenue it generates and will have its own dedicated staff.

Summary

This bill presents an opportunity for Connecticut to put into action its long discussions about "smart growth" type development. TCDAA is based on existing and successful Connecticut entities. It would help communities do what they want to do.

On behalf of the Governor and Secretary Barnes I urge you to support this bill. By doing so you will help local governments and the state work together to grow Connecticut's economy in a way that builds on our investments in transportation infrastructure, reduces the state's "carbon footprint" and creates new, exciting, viable communities that will attract young people and empty nesters.

Thank you for your consideration.