



A Nonpartisan Public Policy and Research Office of the Connecticut General Assembly

Testimony of Julia Evans Starr, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging

Planning and Development Committee

March 4, 2016

Senator Osten, Representative Miller and members of the Planning and Development Committee, my name is Julia Evans Starr, and I am Executive Director for Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging. I thank you for this opportunity to comment SB 19: An Act Establishing the Transit Corridor Development Assistance Authority.

As you know, Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging is the nonpartisan, public policy and research office of the General Assembly. It has been an effective statewide leader in improving the quality of life for older adults and persons with disabilities for 22 years. With just 4 employees and 21 volunteer members from across the state, we shape innovative public policies, promote government accountability, establish diverse partnerships and coalitions, and analyze demographic trends to prepare Connecticut for a growing older adult population.

**SB 19: An Act Establishing the Transit Corridor Development Assistance Authority
~ CT's Legislative Commission on Aging Supports**

This bill seeks to establish the Transit Corridor Development Assistance Authority (TCDA) which would work in a coordinated manner with regional planning entities and municipalities to stimulate new investment, economic development, transit-oriented development, and tourism, art, culture, history, education and entertainment opportunities in areas along Connecticut's transit corridors.

As a result of testimony submitted on the concept during the last legislative session, the bill as written this year does not provide for any condemnation authority by TCDA; ensures inclusion in TCDA's governing body by the host town's chief elected official; and executive director of the relevant regional council of governments; and clarifies that local zoning and regulations are not superseded.

By way of additional background, this General Assembly, through the passage of Public Act 13-109, charged the Commission on Aging with spearheading an ongoing, statewide livable communities initiative. The initiative works to ready local, regional and state leaders to plan for Connecticut communities with an increasingly older, longer-lived demographic. At least 20% of almost every town's population in the state will be 65 years of age or older by 2025, with some towns exceeding 40%. Between 2010 and 2040, Connecticut's population of people age 65 and older is expected to grow by 57%, with less than 2% growth for people age 20 to 64 during the same period.ⁱ Increased longevity, declining birth rates, and

State Capitol
210 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106
860-240-5200
www.cga.ct.gov/coa

Julia Evans Starr
Executive Director

Deb Migneault
Senior Policy Analyst

Alyssa Norwood
Project Manager

Christianne Kovel
Communications
Specialist

*With 21 volunteer
board members from
across the state*



declining mortality are all converging to create a new, long-term reality—older adults will comprise an increasingly large proportion of the population.

One of the guiding values of the livable communities initiative and the Commission’s broader work in general is the notion of choice—promoting personal dignity and functional independence across the lifespan by creating a broad array of choices, in housing, transportation and otherwise, to meet each person’s evolving needs.

As you know, transit-oriented development is a type of development that is compact, walkable, contains a mixture of land uses—for example, a neighborhood that integrates housing, offices and retail—and located within half-mile of quality, dependable public transportation. Approximately 90% of transit ridership originates from the half-mile around transit nodes.

Transit-oriented development benefits everyone, but is especially critical for the third of the population that does not drive, including older adults and individuals with disabilities. Other benefits of connecting development with existing transportation infrastructure include healthier, more active lifestyles for everyone; lowered vehicular congestion and air pollution because of reduced driving; improved connectivity between residents and economic opportunity; and reduced household transportation costs, freeing up income for other purposes.

It is well-established that property values near transit lines and stations usually increaseⁱⁱ, though the most significant increases require more complex projects and supportive local policies. With respect to actualizing complex projects, a TCDA could help municipal governments coordinate the necessary master planning, zoning, assembly of multiple parcels of land and potential remediation of contaminated properties. The resulting development would create more aging-supportive environments, enabling Connecticut residents to age in their homes and communities. Moreover, they would attract residents across the lifespan—including the myriad of professionals needed to support those seeking to age in place.

Actualizing development along transit corridors is necessary but not sufficient to optimize economic opportunity and livability. We support Governor’s Bill 19. But we encourage you to consider this bill as part of a more comprehensive strategy to support aging-supportive environments, one that incentivizes communities to, where appropriate ensure that municipal plans of conservation and development include planning for older adults and individuals with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities, pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 8-23(e)(1)(I) and revise zoning codes to generally maximize opportunities for Smart Growth. We also support a comprehensive nonpartisan analysis of impediments to transit-oriented development (TOD) that go beyond towns’ potential challenges in managing the various complexities of TOD projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

ⁱ These figures were calculated by Connecticut’s Legislative Commission on Aging in partnership with the Connecticut State Data Center. For more detailed information, see our Interactive Data Story at www.coa.cga.ct.gov.

ⁱⁱ For example, according to Smart Growth America, in Washington D.C., 4% of the city’s land area is within half-mile of public transit. But it generates 28% of the City’s property tax base.