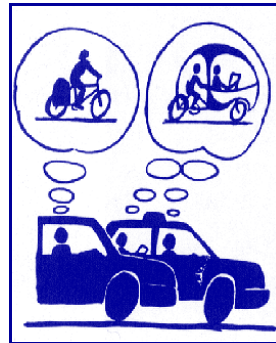


# Transportation Choice for Connecticut

## A Green Paper



**Transportation Choices Coalition  
March, 2001**

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## **A Green Paper**

**Transportation Choices Coalition, March 2001**

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### **The Transportation Choices Coalition**

**The thirteen member organizations of the Transportation Choices Coalition represent a state-wide constituency of more than 50,000 citizens. The Coalition's mission is to advocate for user-friendly and environmentally sustainable transportation policies and mass transit projects. We seek solutions that reduce car and truck dependency, strengthen cities and town centers and discourage sprawl and preserve open space. We support initiatives that foster environmentally responsible development and enhance Connecticut's quality of life.**

### **Coalition members**

**Connecticut Fund for the Environment**

**Tri-State Transportation Campaign**

**All Aboard**

**Association of Commuter Rail Employees**

**Citizens for a Sensible Six**

**Connecticut Bicycle Coalition**

**Connecticut Citizens Action Group**

**Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice**

**Connecticut Rail Commuter Council**

**Connecticut Transportation Institute**

**Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation**

**Environmental Defense**

**Shore Line East Riders Association**

**Sierra Club Connecticut Chapter**

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1032 Chapel Street, 3rd floor, New Haven, CT 06510    203-787-0646    [www.cfenv.org](http://www.cfenv.org)

#### **Tri-State Transportation Campaign**

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## The Opportunity to Reinvent Transportation in Connecticut

Connecticut's need to address a wide variety of transportation problems is acute. Our transportation infrastructure is used more heavily than ever before. More than ever is known about the environmental and health problems caused by vehicle emissions and vehicle-related pollution like highway run-off. A record number of trucks ply highways and streets. Communities seek to defend quality of life by slowing traffic and protecting pedestrians. All levels of government are grappling with the difficult problem of sprawl development.

These issues call for fresh thinking about transportation. Today, Connecticut is fortunate to face an opportunity to consider its transportation needs and establish new priorities and programs. In 2000, the state's Transportation Summit brought these issues to the fore and placed transportation reform high on the public agenda. This year, government leaders and a wide range of constituencies and stakeholders will begin thinking concretely about approaches and projects that will give Connecticut a 21st Century transportation system.

The state-wide policies and specific projects we recommend in this document are based on several general principles.

First, citizens, local elected officials, regional planners and transportation managers around the country acknowledge the fact that, when it comes to highways, we cannot build our way out of congestion. This point's corollary is: "If we build it, they will come." In busy metropolitan areas and critical development corridors, adding highway capacity will simply attract and become consumed by more and longer car and truck trips.

Thus, mobility improvements must focus on efficiency — moving more people in fewer vehicles — and leave behind yesterday's preoccupation with a bigger road system. We must forge attractive public transit systems geared to trips other than commuting to New York City or serving as a last resort for car-less households.

Public transit and other alternatives to driving work best in urban and town environments that accommodate and mix a variety of uses — work, living, shopping and recreation. Future land use planning must take into account and promote transit, cycling and walking. Connecticut municipalities have strong roles to play improving access to destinations and activities important in people's lives. Cities and towns' membership in metropolitan planning organizations positions them well to begin bridging the divide between transportation and land use planning.


Indeed, the "payoff" from a smarter, more balanced transportation system will not come just in the form of easier commutes and speedier deliveries. It can also mean reduced local traffic impacts, cleaner air and water, a better environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, and towns and cities that are more convenient, convivial and "whole."

We believe that state government leaders, municipal officials, business owners, transportation managers, commuters, civic organizations, labor groups and citizens share these goals. We urge everyone interested in the future of Connecticut to embrace the opportunity to reinvent our transportation system. We look forward to working with you.


**Transportation Choices Coalition**

# Summary of Recommendations

## Make Mass Transit Work for More People

- Accelerate planned capital improvements to upgrade and improve the New Haven Line. 
- Prioritize implementation of new Capital Region rail and dedicated bus-way lines.
- Capitalize on existing rail service by:
  - ⇒ Expanding capacity on the New Haven line through more express service to New York and high-frequency intra-state shuttle service between Greenwich and New Haven.
  - ⇒ Further expand planned increases to Shore Line East service.
- Add station parking as part of regional and local planning processes that emphasize mixed use development at transit stations, bicycle and pedestrian station access, and local station feeder services.
- Implement recommendations for more bus service from ConnDOT's July, 2000 "Statewide Bus System Study," and in MPO and other regional plans (like Q-Bridge transit scenarios).
- Induce new ridership with more frequent bus service in promising corridors. Capitalize on recent bus rider increases by boosting service frequencies.
- Consolidate the 20 separate agencies that manage buses in Connecticut today to increase bus operating and planning efficiency.
- End diesel bus purchases, and phase in a fueling infrastructure for a cleaner fuel like compressed natural gas (CNG). Lift DMV rule that restricts this conversion.
- Purchase only modern, user-friendly bus models, such as those with low-floor chassis.
- Establish a dedicated mass transit operating account in the state budget.

## Make Highway Expansion a Last Resort

- Expand highway capacity only where regional planning has clearly designated a desired growth zone, and where no other capital project or improvement can meet travel demand. 
- Protect investment in highway capacity by:
  - ⇒ Using planning and transportation demand management measures, such as roadway pricing, zoning that reduces sprawl and highway access management that prevents roads from being chopped up into strip malls.
  - ⇒ Considering application of "value pricing" road toll strategies. Obtain funding from the Federal Highway Administration's Value Pricing program to conduct an overview of roadway pricing's potential to reduce congestion in key CT corridors.
  - ⇒ Examining the potential of permitting solo drivers to pay a toll for access to the underutilized high-occupancy vehicle lanes in the Hartford area

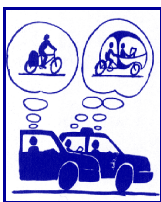
## Smart Growth, Smart Transportation

- Prioritize investment in mass transit, traffic calming, bikeways and the existing roadway network, to boost the viability and quality of life in town centers and cities. 
- Implement a moratorium on highway and road expansion projects in areas that the State Conservation and Development Plan classifies as Preservation and Conservation areas.
- Develop skills and capacity at ConnDOT to consider and model the impacts different land use patterns and policies will have on traffic generation and flow.
- Implement planning procedures for joint ConnDOT-municipal work to plan land use and transportation together in congested or potentially congested corridors.

- Develop a new local aid program to encourage transit-oriented development.
- Increase Town Aid for Roads.
- Empower the State DEP to regulate big development projects on the basis of their traffic impacts.

### Better Options for Short Trips

- Ensure that all state planning and design guidelines encourage creation of bike lane networks, pedestrian-friendly streets and traffic calming projects.
- Complement and link greenways with on-street bicycle lane networks.
- Increase state spending on bike and pedestrian projects.
- Create a new local aid program to encourage municipalities to invest in cycling, pedestrian and traffic calming projects.
- ConnDOT should adopt a state-wide policy that bike/ped improvements are routinely built into state roadway projects and keep an inventory of such improvements. MPOs should adopt the same policy for county and local projects in regional Transportation Improvement Programs.
- ConnDOT should conduct a statewide survey of the worst pedestrian death and injury locations, and develop capacity to extend traffic calming technical assistance to localities.



### Reducing Truck Dependence

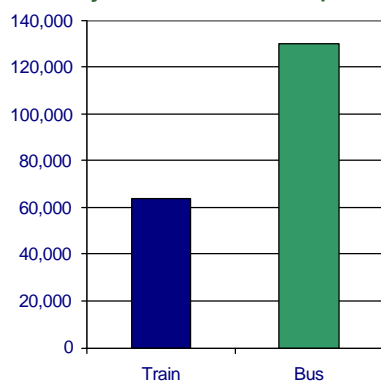
- ConnDOT should formulate truck-miles traveled ceilings and reduction targets in key corridors.
- The state should seek to maximize cargo diversion to rail freight and coastal barge feeder services to New Haven, Bridgeport and New London. Prioritize container-related port upgrades and rail freight links.
- Connecticut's state and Congressional leaders should support construction of a cross-NY Harbor rail freight tunnel.
- Allocate more money for ConnDOT's truck inspection and enforcement programs so that more weigh stations can be opened during more peak hours.
- Invest in clean fuel infrastructure and advocate with partner states and agencies in the I-95 Corridor Coalition to create an East Coast clean fuel corridor.



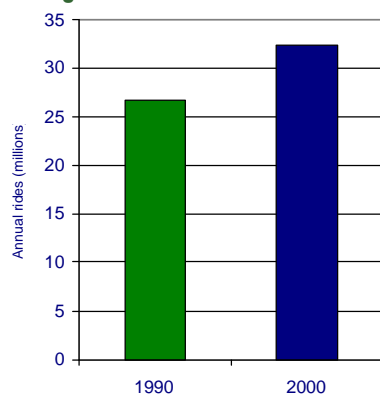
# 1. Make mass transit work for more people

**The Hartford region should be a focal point of mass transit system expansion**

**Weekday CT Transit Ridership,**



**New Haven Line Annual Ridership: 21% growth in the 1990s**



Where additional passenger transportation capacity is needed or desired, Connecticut should emphasize mass transit. The state should not only accelerate capital improvements slated for the New Haven Line, but should also adopt other areas of transit investment as critical priorities.

## Rail capacity

The Hartford region is a strong candidate to be the focal point of mass transit system expansion. The Capital Region Council of Government's "Regional Transit Strategy" calls for New Haven-Springfield commuter rail, four exclusive busway alignments and a downtown circulator service. But at present, only the New Britain-Hartford busway appears in the state-wide Transportation Improvement Program, with design work scheduled in 2001 and construction sometime thereafter.<sup>1</sup>

- The implementation schedule for all of the Capital Region mass transit projects should be accelerated, with completion of the system targeted for 2007 or 2008. Funding should come from a ConnDOT capital program reoriented away from expensive highway expansion projects — including highway projects the Capital Region COG has included in its Regional Transit Strategy, such as I-84 expansion — toward transit capacity expansion.
- Within the context of the recent Transportation Summit and the state's reconsideration of transportation priorities, ConnDOT and CRCOG should also consider whether light rail would be a more attractive option to potential passengers and host communities in some or all of the Capital Region bus-way corridors.

In addition to creating new transit lines, the state should act to capitalize on existing rail service:

ConnDOT is planning modest increases in Shore Line East rail service to compensate for highway disruptions that will be caused by its Q-Bridge project. The Shore Line East strategy should be more aggressive, promoting the line as a robust regional alternative to I-95. In fact, environmental documents for the Q-Bridge project detailed a stronger transit alternative than ConnDOT has selected.<sup>2</sup> It would:

- Reduce average wait times for peak Shore Line East trains from 40 minutes to just over 20 minutes.
- Implement two new daily direct trains from the east shore to Manhattan, with many new connections to Metro-North trains serving Fairfield County.
- Extend off-peak Shore Line East service to weekends and

later evening periods.

With upgraded signaling and rolling stock, capacity could be greatly increased on the New Haven line. Growing ridership and crowding in fact dictate an urgent need for additional investment and new service. Priorities in this area include:

- More express service to New York
- High-frequency intra-state shuttle service between Greenwich and New Haven.

The present level of investment in New Haven Line rail cars is only permitting service to tread water. That's because 30 year-old cars make up over 80% of the line's fleet, and 50-60 of those are out of service for maintenance on any given day.<sup>3</sup> For comparison, only 36% of NJ Transit's fleet is over 25 years old, and all of these have been rebuilt in the last 15 years.

### **Getting to the train**

Station parking is an important rail system capacity issue. More parking is needed at many stations. However, it should be pursued with other station access strategies, such as local feeder services and better walking and cycling access. Part of such an approach is local land use planning that emphasizes a rail station area as a mixed use commercial and residential center. Using the station as an activity and development anchor optimizes state and community investments in rail services and stations. On the other hand, the platform-in-a-sea-of-parking station model misses this opportunity, and may aggravate local traffic, pedestrian safety and pollution problems.<sup>4</sup>

Additional station parking should be approached as part of regional and local planning processes in the New Haven Line and Shore Line East corridors — and Capital Region corridors as transit lines are developed there. The undertaking should emphasize mixed use development at transit stations, local planning that accommodates bicycle and pedestrian access to stations, a fair distribution of parking that attempts to meet locally-generated demand, and tests the feasibility of bus and local feeder services to reduce some demand for parking.

Successful local experiments with station access jitneys in some New Jersey towns avoided the need for several new parking structures along the booming Morris & Essex Line, and has blossomed into a new NJ Transit local aid program that provides shuttle buses and operating funds to interested municipalities. Metro-North Railroad operates successful station access shuttles to several of its stations on the Hudson and Harlem Valley lines, and Long Island towns are beginning to test similar services.

***30 year-old cars make up over 80% of the New Haven Line s fleet***



*Jitney service in Maplewood, New Jersey connects neighborhoods to the NJ Transit station.*

***The state should make additional bus service as attractive as possible by phasing out diesel-powered buses, and purchasing only the most modern, user friendly models***



*A low-floor CNG bus in New York.*

### **Adding bus service to win more riders**

Connecticut has twice as many weekday bus riders as train riders. ConnDOT should aggressively seek to build on this base of transit users.

- State and regional bodies should prioritize a plan for immediate implementation of recommendations for more bus service laid out in ConnDOT's July, 2000 "Statewide Bus System Study," and in MPO plans where appropriate. The statewide study indicates that its recommendations to increase bus service will require about \$7 million more in annual state operating support.
- The statewide study's recommendations for some service reductions in Hartford and New Haven should be reviewed to ensure that each of these regions see a substantial net increase in service over the next few years. Cuts to service on any route should be subject to well publicized public hearings prior to implementation.
- Transportation officials should begin development of even more robust service enhancement plans. For instance, CT Transit planners should abandon the principle of adding service only where buses become crowded, and attempt to induce new ridership with more frequent service in promising corridors (the service can be withdrawn after a reasonable time if ridership increases do not warrant the heightened service).
- A variety of local project and conditions analyses have examined feasibility of better bus service. A good example is the "Enhanced Bus Corridor" recommended by the Intermodal Concept Development Committee associated with planning for New Haven's Q-Bridge project. The proposal includes bus-oriented intersection improvements and more service between Branford and New Haven, and new rapid service between Union Station and Tweed Airport.<sup>5</sup> The state should compile such recommendations and prioritize their implementation.
- Where bus ridership is already growing, as in CT Transit's Stamford system, Route 1 service in Fairfield County and on the Stamford-Greenwich-White Plains "I-Bus" service, transit planners should attempt to capitalize on recent gains by increasing service frequencies.
- The state and transit operators should seek bus operating and planning efficiencies by consolidating the 20 separate systems that manage buses in Connecticut today.

### **Improving buses image**

The state should make additional bus service as attractive as possible to potential riders and to communities. To that end, ConnDOT should end diesel bus purchases, and phase in a fueling infrastructure for a cleaner fuel like compressed natural gas (CNG). At present, the state exempts bus fleets from even the minimal emissions “opacity” standard it maintains for trucks, helping to associate transit buses with dirty diesel pollution. And amazingly, an outdated DMV rule on the books prohibits conversion of diesel bus fleets to natural gas fueling. This restriction should be lifted immediately. Additionally, the state should purchase only innovative user-friendly bus models, such as those with low-floor chassis. Bus operators should discontinue off-putting practices like darkening bus windows with advertising or other materials that restrict visual contact between passengers and the surrounding streetscape.

### **Paying for more transit**

In general, a more extensive mass transit system, with service frequencies at levels sufficient to attract additional riders, will require the state to commit more annually to mass transit operating expenses. The Legislature and Governor should create a new mass transit operating fund to cope with the demand for new and expanded mass transit services. New York State, for instance, could not run its massive MTA system, or the smaller systems around the state without the Mass Transportation Operating Assistance Fund it created in 1981. The fund is fueled by a mixture of receipts from petroleum business taxes and from sales and business taxes collected within the downstate “Metropolitan Commuter Transportation District.” The fund will receive and distribute about \$1.1 billion of mass transit operating funds in 1999-2000. In Connecticut, such a fund needs to be sufficient to make mass transit operations more sustainable and predictable over time, and give transit planners room to test fare incentive programs for new transit services and for reverse commute and intra-state rail services.

### **State and local policies to support transit**

ConnDOT and Metropolitan Planning Organizations should collaborate to develop a “transit-oriented development” grant category as a new local-aid program. The program would make grants to municipalities actively pursuing land use plans designed to promote mass transit feasibility and use. Cities and towns would use the grants for innovative planning work and to execute zoning changes and local capital projects.

Governor Rowland’s announced intention to extend “Deduct-a-Ride” federal tax benefits for transit commuting to state workers is laudable. Municipalities should consider emulating the Governor’s move for their public workforces.

**Standing behind this bus  
could be more dangerous than  
standing in front of it.**

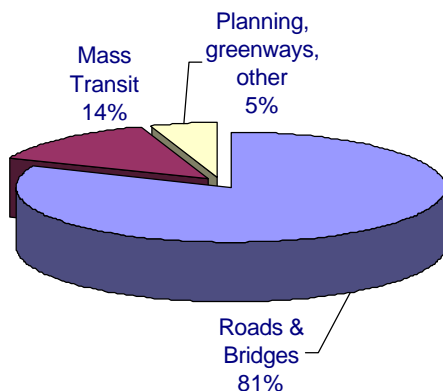
Diesel fumes can kill. Demand clean-fuel buses. Call 1-800-NICE-RIDE.



***A mass transit  
operating assistance  
fund with a dedicated  
state revenue stream  
would make transit  
system expansion  
feasible***

## 2. Make highway expansion a last resort

**In ConnDOT's Statewide Improvement Program, funding for just three large highway expansion projects is nearly twice the mass transit capital budget for the entire state**



Capital spending anticipated in CT 2000-2002 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

### The state's standard response to congestion

Mass transit capacity has advanced very little or declined in Connecticut during the past 50 years. On the other hand, highway capacity has been added steadily, and a look at the 2000 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) shows more of the same in store. The big list of highway expansion projects on ConnDOT's books includes the I-95 "Q"-Bridge project, I-84 expansion, widening US Routes 7 and 6 and Connecticut Routes 2, 10, 20, 66, and 80, and extending CT Route 11.<sup>1</sup>

The TIP is a good barometer of the state's current transportation priorities. Funding totals from the TIP for just three large highway expansion projects — New Haven's I-95 "Q-Bridge" widening and construction of "Super 7" in Fairfield County and Route 6 east of Hartford — is almost twice the mass transit capital budget for the entire state.

24% of the \$3.6 billion of total capital spending anticipated in the Statewide TIP is devoted to projects that will increase highway capacity. Just 14% of it is devoted to mass transit capital spending — mostly for repairing the New Haven line, building the New Britain-Hartford Busway and the Bridgeport Intermodal Station.

### Highway expansion is self-defeating

ConnDOT's road widening plans fly in the face of increasing acceptance around the world, even in highway engineering circles, that widening highways will not relieve traffic congestion, and will likely worsen it over the long run. I-270 in Montgomery County, Maryland, for instance, was widened in the late 1980s and early 90s, up to twelve lanes on some stretches. But the road is again "a rolling parking lot," according to local officials. "I didn't in my wildest dreams think it would fill up so fast," a former Maryland official told the *Washington Post*.<sup>2</sup> A recent University of California study found that road expansion is generally filled by traffic the extra capacity attracts within five years.<sup>3</sup> That's because widening roads, especially in a context of uncontrolled land development, is an invitation to further-flung development and more and longer car and truck trips. This induced traffic will consume any road capacity that is built, so the return society receives for an expensive public investment is six lanes of gridlock where there previously were four.

While highway expansion's ability to relieve congestion is dubious, the power of more pavement and traffic to negatively affect the character of communities and critical environmental resources is less in debate. Road expansion plans across the state are frequently contested by citizens and local officials. The highway section of the Statewide Improvement Program

may be as much a blueprint for future conflict between ConnDOT and Connecticut communities as a roadmap for needed investments. Following the Transportation Summit, ConnDOT and the MPOs have a responsibility to forge policies that have a stronger chance of meeting a consensus around the state.

**Fix it first**

Expensive highway expansion projects also cut into resources the state could use to bring existing roads and bridges into a state of good repair. While ConnDOT’s concerted effort to repair the state-owned road and bridge system in the 1980s and 1990s is well known, local roads and bridges are deteriorating.<sup>4</sup> Even the repair effort on the state system is incomplete, as recent reports on rates of bridge deficiencies indicate.<sup>5</sup> The state reduced funding levels for Town Aid for Roads for much of the 1990s. Even with recent increases, inflation-adjusted Town Aid for Roads has declined significantly over the past two decades.

State neglect of local road systems is an expensive mistake, because repair costs balloon if a road or street is deprived of basic preventive maintenance for too long. Ironically, the combination of the state’s recent gas tax cuts and stingy Town Aid levels has probably shifted a portion of Connecticut’s transportation burden from motorists to homeowners. Low Town Aid levels create direct pressure on municipal property taxes.

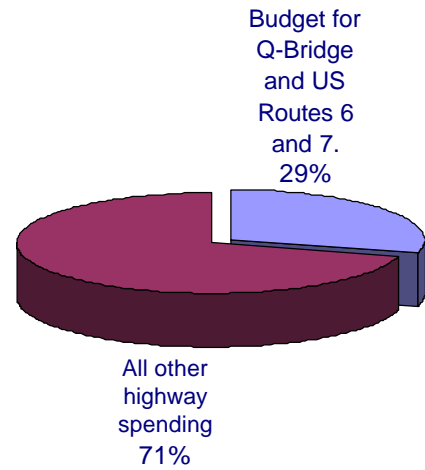
A healthier policy would be a shift of resources from large-scale highway widening plans to basic maintenance of roads and streets.

**Highway policies to reduce sprawl**

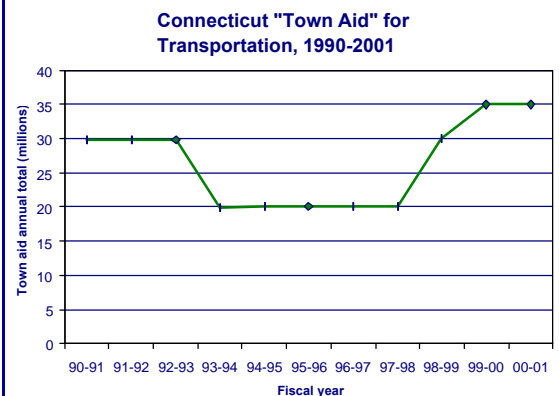
The state should issue a policy ending highway expansion in conservation and preservation areas designated by the State Conservation and Development Plan.

Elsewhere, highway capacity expansion should only proceed where regional planning has clearly designated an area as a desired growth zone, and no other transportation capital project or combination of improvements and programs can meet travel demand.

In such a case, public investment in the capacity increase should be protected with planning and transportation demand management measures, such as roadway pricing, zoning that reduces sprawl and highway access management that prevents roads from being chopped up into strip malls. Only then is it likely that road improvements will actually help traffic conditions, instead of being simply sacrificed to added traffic. ConnDOT should be empowered to formalise such “capacity preservation plans” with municipalities on a corridor basis.

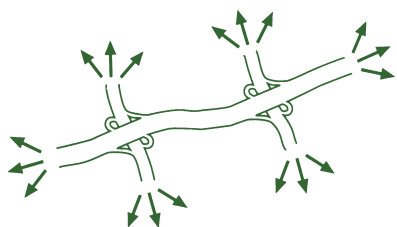


*Make-up of highway spending in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.*

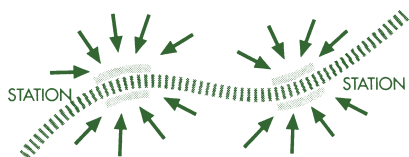


### 3. Smart growth, smart transportation

**The state should implement a moratorium on highway expansion projects in land the State Conservation and Development Plan classifies as a Preservation Area**



Highways disperse development. Mass transit concentrates it.



Although “smart growth” is discussed everywhere as the antidote to the problems of sprawl development, there has been little discussion in Connecticut about the connection between highway expansion and sprawl.

Simply put, we cannot hope to achieve anything resembling “smart growth” unless our transportation policies undergo considerable change. As it stands, our transportation system is a pillar of sprawl. Scattered homes and workplaces made possible by cars and highways have led to demand for more roads, which have in turn made more land accessible for development. Along the way, walking, cycling, streetcars and freight railroads have been crowded out. The longer and more numerous car trips required by spread out settlement have outpaced all efforts to accommodate them with a more extensive road network.

Smart new transit projects, like Shore Line East and those proposed in the Capital Region are examples of initiatives that can focus investment in cities and town centers. Transportation planning in Connecticut, with direct representation of municipal leaders on MPO voting boards, seems in fact to be uniquely set up to better unite transportation and land use planning.

To facilitate this, the state should:

- Prioritize investment in mass transit, traffic calming, bikeways and the existing roadway network, to boost the viability and quality of life in town centers and cities.
- Implement a moratorium on highway and road expansion projects in areas that the State Conservation and Development Plan classifies as Preservation areas.
- Require ConnDOT to develop the skills and capacity to consider and model the impacts different land use patterns and policies will have on traffic generation and flow.
- Develop a corridor planning grant program as an incentive for municipalities along congested highways to undertake planning that can ameliorate future traffic growth. Several joint municipal/regional/state planning exercises, like that along Route 190 in Enfield and Somers, are already moving in the direction of combined transportation and land use planning. This type of effort should be formalized as a central part of ConnDOT’s planning repertoire.

### **Traffic Impacts of Large Developments**

Additionally, the State Department of Environmental Protection must be given the power to regulate and deny gigantic traffic generating developments such as malls or casinos which would gridlock nearby highways. Currently the DEP has no regulatory authority to just say no and protect commuters from the additional jams and air pollution caused by poorly planned large-scale developments.

We already require this kind of common-sense approach to protect other public infrastructure. For instance, when a sewer system is overloaded, state law requires a moratorium on additional sewer hook-ups which would overload the system and create sewer plant pollution problems. We know congestion creates not only major pollution problems, but tries the patience of the public and has economic impacts. Massive traffic generators that would bring traffic to a halt must be regulated.

### **Locally-responsive policy**

Important potential “payoffs” of transportation reform are travel choices, policies and infrastructure that work better for Connecticut communities. A variety of recommendations in this paper call for new, locally-focused programs and planning that would help bring transportation policy into line with heightened interest in smart growth and towns and cities that work better. To reiterate, these recommendations are:

- Significantly increase Town Aid for Roads.
- Develop capacity and planning procedures for joint ConnDOT-municipal work on land use and transportation in congested corridors. Relatedly, empower ConnDOT to enter into road “capacity preservation plans” with municipalities.
- Develop a new local aid program, over and above Town Aid for Roads, that provides grants to cities and towns specifically for bicycle and pedestrian safety projects.
- Develop a similar program to encourage municipal planning promoting transit-oriented development.
- Update state planning and design guidelines to encourage local implementation of bike-friendly and traffic calming street designs.
- Establish a funding program for New Haven Line towns and cities to begin local transit jitneys connecting neighborhoods and train stations.

These recommendations would begin a series of small changes that will add up over time to a more flexible, accommodating transportation system and streetscape, without making a big dent in ConnDOT’s core programs.

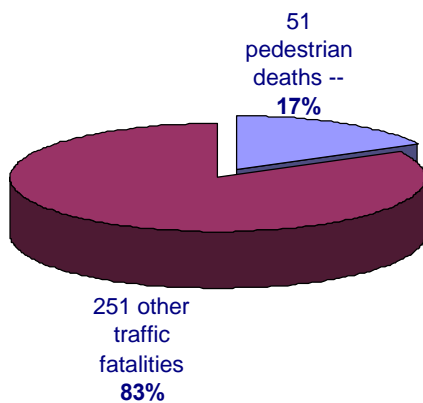


*New and expanded roads frequently act as can-openers for development of open space.*

***The State DEP should be empowered to regulate huge developments that threaten to gridlock nearby highways***

## 4. Better options for short trips

Connecticut Traffic Fatalities, 1999



*Danger to pedestrians is a largely unaddressed transportation safety issue.*

***Most cycling and walking will take place on existing streets***

In the early 1900's, at the dawn of the auto age, a Viennese physician decried the automobile for its "constant mobilization of passerby" — for forcing those without cars to behave according to its rules.<sup>1</sup> The ensuing century found city and town design become oriented to moving cars. Pedestrians and cyclists were crowded out of the public right-of-way, and provisions for them were also shouldered aside in public construction budgets.

Today, interest in cycling and walking have come full circle. Many citizens — given safe, convenient conditions — would opt for a ten-minute bike commute over a 30-minute car commute on traffic-clogged streets, or a walk for an errand over a car trip highlighted by a lengthy, frustrating search for parking. The emergence of member-supported organizations like the Connecticut Bicycle Coalition demonstrate heightened public interest in better provision for human-powered travel.

There are countless places in Connecticut that, with sensitive planning and street design, could better accommodate bicycling and walking. Moreover, pedestrian and cyclist safety is a significant but largely unrecognized problem in the state: pedestrian deaths in 1999 were 16.9% of total traffic deaths, up from 14.2% the year before.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence that recent traffic growth has impacted local roads and streets more heavily than interstates and other arterials lends urgency to calls to design streets in ways that better protect and accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.<sup>3</sup>

Passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act in 1991 made federal funding available for cycling and walking infrastructure through a variety of new programs.

State and municipal governments have responded to this opportunities to an extent, utilizing most of the funds they receive under the federal Transportation Enhancements program for greenway-type cycling and walking paths, and for town and city center pedestrian amenities.

However, ConnDOT needs to move beyond the relatively small Enhancements program and begin to tap the other federal funds for which bike and pedestrian projects are eligible, and consider using state funds for such projects as well.

Our analysis of the state-wide Transportation Improvement Program shows bike and pedestrian project costs make up about 1.4% of the non-transit total. The state and MPOs should set sights higher, and devote 2.5-3% of non-transit infrastructure investment to cycling and walking networks that enhance circulation and access in towns, cities and transportation hubs. Even more important than increased spending is for Conn-DOT

and the MPOs to plan and extend cycling and walking networks beyond greenway and rail-trail projects.

Greenways can form important parts of bicycling and walking networks, but they are by nature limited in extent, and relatively expensive to create. Most cycling and walking will always take place on existing streets. The state, MPOs and municipalities need to develop other types of bikeway projects, especially low cost, on-street bike lane networks. They should also begin to analyze the worst pedestrian danger spots in the state and respond accordingly with sidewalk connectivity and traffic calming projects.

Traffic fatalities in Connecticut appear to be relatively concentrated in a few municipalities. In 1998, about one-third of all traffic deaths and one-third of pedestrian fatalities took place in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Norwalk, Stamford and Waterbury. New Haven was the site of over 8% of the state's traffic deaths that year, and Stamford saw more than 10% of 1998 pedestrian fatalities. The numbers suggest these municipalities as early candidates for concerted state-local promotion of traffic calming and other safety programs.<sup>3</sup>

The state especially should ensure that all planning and design guidelines promote municipal development of on-street bike lane networks and traffic calming street designs. State guidelines and regulations should never hinder local development of safe streets that balance the needs of different types of users.

- ConnDOT should adopt a state-wide policy that bike/ped improvements are routinely built into state roadway projects. The Dept. should inventory such improvements.
- MPOs should adopt a similar policy for county and local projects that are part of regional Transportation Improvement Programs.
- Funding for greenway projects should be prioritized for well-traveled transportation corridors, such as Farmington-New Haven.
- The state should conduct a survey of the worst pedestrian death and injury locations, and develop capacity to extend traffic calming technical assistance to localities.
- ConnDOT should develop new pedestrian and cyclist safety local aid programs, augmenting Transportation Enhancements and Town Aid funding with new state resources and appropriate federal sources such as STP-urban, STP-safety and CMAQ. Municipalities would apply for the funds — the program will act as an incentive for towns to invest in these areas.

***The state should ensure that planning and design guidelines promote development of bike lane networks and traffic calming street designs***



*Traffic calming: a median island and speed humps physically slow traffic in a Maryland community.*

## 5. Space on highways is a scarce resource

**ConnDOT should consider allowing solo drivers to use E-ZPass tags to buy into the underused HOV lanes on I-84**



*Toll facilities on E-470 in Denver provide a choice between traditional cash toll booths and non-stop, highway speed express lanes for vehicles equipped with an E-ZPass-like electronic tag.*

Although Connecticut abolished road tolls in the 1970s, congestion has become so bad on corridors like I-95, the Merritt Parkway and I-91 that state transportation planners should seriously consider the application of “value pricing” strategies — charging a higher toll during rush hours than at less crowded times.

The critical point is that tolls should be considered as much a tool to manage and reduce traffic congestion as a revenue measure to help solve problems like the current shortage of mass transit operating funds, Town Aid and other types of funding.

A 1994 study for the Hartford Rideshare Corp. found that market-based transportation management measures, including congestion pricing, had by far the most significant impact in reducing rush hour congestion of a variety of policies and investments studied.<sup>1</sup>

Some still regard “value” or “congestion” pricing as beyond the pale of real-world policy. But in 2000, the NJ Turnpike implemented higher peak and lower off-peak tolls, with little public outcry. The Port Authority of NY/NJ has recently approved an even more aggressive congestion pricing plan for its Hudson River crossings. Consider the editorial reaction:

...the plan's embrace of congestion pricing is most heartening. Transportation authorities can no longer ignore basic economics and price a vehicle's use of a regional asset - be it a bridge, a turnpike, a tunnel or an airport runway - with no regard to demand for that asset when used. Access to the Holland Tunnel is a scarce resource at 8:30 in the morning and should not be priced the same at midnight. — *NY Times*<sup>2</sup>

Most other NY-area papers published similar sentiments. Clearly, the issue has emerged from “third rail” status. It may be the time to consider similar policies in Connecticut.

An important factor in congestion pricing's recent breakthrough in New Jersey is that electronic toll collection technology makes the system much easier to set up and administer. It also offers significant time savings to motorists. Indeed, it's likely that within a decade, most toll payments along the East Coast will be made by cars traveling at highway speeds.

The state should:

- Obtain funding from the Federal Highway Administration's Value Pricing program to conduct an overview of roadway pricing's potential to reduce congestion in key CT corridors.
- Examine the potential of permitting solo drivers to pay a toll for access to the underutilized high-occupancy vehicle lanes in the Hartford area (the revenue can be used to install E-ZPass readers there — any surplus can support mass transit).

## 6. Relieve ever-increasing truck impacts

Trucks contribute significantly to peak hour congestion on Connecticut roadways, especially I-95 in Fairfield County. Trucks in the I-95 corridor contribute to crawling traffic because of slow acceleration and deceleration, resulting in dangerous stop-and-go traffic. A 1995 ConnDOT traffic count on I-95 at Norwalk showed that trucks comprise on average 26% of all vehicles traveling northbound from 6-9 am, and 13% southbound from 6-9 am. Trucks comprise 9% overall from 6 am to 8 pm. Undoubtedly, truck trips have grown since then. The single most prevalent truck in Connecticut's traffic is the five-axle tractor trailer truck in the heaviest class—over 33,000 lbs.<sup>1</sup>

Exhaust from trucks is extremely polluting; trucks emit large quantities of diesel particles known as particulate matter (fine soot), which has now been classified as both toxic and carcinogenic by authorities that have studied the subject. In fact, scientists have found the risk of cancer due to exposure to diesel exhaust over one's lifetime to be about one in 1,000—one thousand times greater than the accepted national threshold for toxic substances. Diesel exhaust also has severe adverse impacts on respiratory systems and triggers asthma attacks, chronic emphysema and bronchitis, causing 64,000 premature deaths nationwide.<sup>2</sup>

Safety is a problem too. CT inspects a very low proportion of trucks compared to other states. While trucks comprise less than 9% of vehicles on the road daily in CT, trucks are implicated in 20% of all accidents.<sup>3</sup>

With the Port of New York and New Jersey set to expand its container cargo throughput, trucks destined for New England through Connecticut can only continue to grow unless steps are taken to develop better rail and barge freight systems. The statistics are sobering. Container trade is expected to double by 2010, and perhaps quadruple or quintuple by 2020. While CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern Railroad, as well as Providence and Worcester and other short lines, hope to capture some of that expansion, there is still a long distance to go in re-developing the rail freight system in the northeastern United States.

### Alternatives to Trucks

Currently all rail freight that enters and leaves New England uses two rail routes through western Massachusetts. The circuitous, 150-mile route for trains originating in New Jersey or the south to Albany and back to southwestern or coastal Connecticut is time-consuming and costly. Hence most freight is shipped by truck. Freight trains using the New Haven Line have no direct access to areas west of the Hudson, including the New York/New Jersey port. The New Haven Line has low clearances and

***Freight container traffic in the NY/NJ/CT region is projected to quadruple by 2020***



*Container barging could offer relief from burgeoning truck traffic in the coastal corridor.*



*Connecticut's leaders must ensure that the state is positioned to benefit from growing rail freight activity in the northeastern U.S.*

***All rail freight entering and leaving New England must use two western Massachusetts rail lines***

intensive passenger use, but more freight trains could operate on it using “road-railer” and single-stack container units. A cross-NY Harbor rail tunnel and through freight rail service along the line (especially if clearances were improved to allow for double-stack service) could benefit CT greatly. Connecticut’s state and Congressional leaders should back the cross-harbor project, and ensure that Connecticut prepares the rail and yard infrastructure needed to take advantage of the tunnel upon its completion.

Expanding coastal barging could bring relief even faster. NYC’s Strategic Port Plan found that potential diversion of truck trips carrying containers would be 94,500 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) (a standard container is about 1.6 TEU) if a NY/NJ-Connecticut barge service operated twice daily at 75% capacity — capturing about 54% of NY-New England cargo that crosses NY Harbor.<sup>4</sup> The state and municipalities should partner with port operators to prioritize container-related port infrastructure upgrades in Bridgeport, New Haven and New London. Freight rail connections — like the Middletown-Hartford track the Providence and Worcester Railroad seeks to restore — between the coast and inland markets should also be a strong capital program priority.

Overall, the state should develop a freight strategy to reduce truck dependence. A good starting point would be formulation of truck-miles traveled ceilings and reduction targets in key corridors, followed by analysis of the capital investment and policy changes needed to attain them.

### **Greener Trucks**

ConnDOT should also reduce truck impacts by planning and financing a network of non-diesel clean fueling stations along I-95 and other major truck routes, along with other states and agencies that are members of the I-95 Corridor Coalition. The state should also develop incentives for truck firms to switch fleets to cleaner fuels.

Subsidies exist to make the changes; the federal government offers a \$5,000 tax credit for purchase of clean fuel medium-size trucks and \$50,000 for heavier trucks. Help is also available from the US Dept. of Energy Clean Cities program. Cities along I-95 with port facilities should adopt a clean vehicle and terminal equipment approach, switching tugs, forklifts, cranes and on-port vehicles to CNG or another non-diesel fuel. This is occurring elsewhere. A coalition of Corpus Christi, TX businesses, government agencies and environmental groups expects to triple the number of clean-fuel port-related vehicles to about 600, and install 28 alternative fueling depots there by

2002. The Port of Los Angeles (the nation's second largest port) recently launched a clean engine/fuel program. The Port of Oakland has paid to switch trucks to CNG from diesel where those trucks traverse low-income neighborhoods near the port. In Texas, Houston, Dallas and San Antonio are working to establish a "clean corridor" for long-haul trucks along two interstate routes there. Transportation authorities in Utah, Arizona, Nevada and California have already begun to establish a "clean interstate corridor" complete with alternative fueling stations. CT should lead its East Coast neighbors in following suit.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, to enhance safety and save (or at least help pay for) some of the punishment trucks inflict on our highways, ConnDOT should receive more money for its truck inspection and enforcement programs. ConnDOT should open more weigh stations for longer periods and inspect more trucks. A 1998 Northeast Transportation Institute study found that Connecticut weighed 200,000 trucks per year, versus 5 million for Colorado and Florida. Similarly, while Connecticut inspected 17,000 trucks per year, Colorado, Florida, New Jersey and Kentucky each inspect four times that number annually.<sup>6</sup>

***Connecticut's state  
and Congressional  
leaders should back  
the NY Harbor rail  
freight tunnel project***

# Notes

## 1. Make Transit Work for More Citizens

1. CRCOG Regional Transit Strategy:  
[www.crcog.org/transportation2.htm](http://www.crcog.org/transportation2.htm)  
  
CT Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP): [www.dot.state.ct.us/bureau/pp/docs/stip/index.html](http://www.dot.state.ct.us/bureau/pp/docs/stip/index.html)
2. Q-Bridge SDEIS Technical Report 3, Appendix B page B-2
3. *Mobilizing the Region #270*, Tri-State Transportation Campaign [www.tstc.org](http://www.tstc.org)
4. A number of studies have demonstrated that eliminating car trips to train stations has big environmental benefits because of the “cold start” phenomenon — vehicle pollution is not emitted steadily over the course of a trip. Rather, it is heavily loaded into the start of a trip, while the engine warms up. Thus, short car trips are often nearly as polluting as longer ones. See, for example, Replogle and Parcels: *Linking Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities with Transit*, Federal Highway Administration National Bicycling and Walking Study Case Study #9, 1992.
5. Q-Bridge SDEIS Technical Report 3, Appendix B page B-2

## 2. Make Highway Expansion a Last Resort

1. CT STIP. Absent clear transportation budget documents from the state, the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, a document the state must publish in order to receive federal highway and mass transit funding, is the best existing document providing a “big picture” look at anticipated capital improvements in Connecticut. However, cautionary points about the STIP include:
  - The STIP is highly amendable, so that projects listed there may be pushed off to future years or deleted.
  - The STIP is subject to “fiscal constraint” for only three years, so that projects in the current document that entail significant investment after 2002 are relegated to a

vague “FYI” category without clear dates for funding or construction.

2. “Widen the Roads, Drivers Will Come.” *Washington Post*, January 4, 1999
3. Hansen, Mark and Yranling Huang. “Road Supply and Traffic in California Urban Areas,” *Transportation Research*, Vol. 30A, No 1 35-50. 1996.
4. “Repairing Connecticut’s Local Roads and Bridges: the Unfinished Agenda.” CT Conference of Municipalities, Oct., 2000. This briefing cites a number of state and independent studies, the latest of which puts the repair bill for Connecticut’s local road and bridge system well over \$300 million.
5. See “Records: Bridges Deficient.” *Hartford Courant*, February 20, 2001.

## 4. Better options for short trips

1. Cited in Wolfgang Sachs, *For the Love of the Automobile Looking Back into the History of our Desires*. 1984, p.22 Re-cited in *A 21st Century Transportation System: A Vision for Our Region s Land, Cities and Communities* Tri-State Transportation Campaign, 1994.
2. Statistics provided by ConnDOT’s Bureau of Policy and Planning. We gratefully acknowledge the Bureau’s assistance. In 1999, there were 302 traffic fatalities in CT. 51 of them were pedestrians.
3. “Repairing Connecticut’s Local Roads and Bridges: the Unfinished Agenda.” CT Conference of Municipalities. The briefing cites a 1998 study by Apogee Research which found a 50% 1986-1995 jump in VMT on CT local roads, compared to a statewide increase of 15%.
4. Statistics provided by ConnDOT Bureau of Policy and Planning. In 1998, there were 331 traffic fatalities in CT. 47 of them were pedestrians. See also *Connecticut Traffic Accident Facts 1998*, CT Dept. of Transportation, 2000.

## 5. Space on highways is a scarce resource

1. Executive Summary, *Connecticut Transportation Control Measures Evaluation Study Final Report* COMSIS Corporation, prepared for Greater Hartford Rideshare Corporation. Dec. 1994.
2. *New York Times*, November 18, 2000.

## 6. Relieve ever-increasing truck impacts

1. Data compiled in *Greening Freight: Preliminary Research on Heavy-Duty Trucks in Southwestern CT*. CT Fund for the Environment, 1998.
2. See *Breath-Taking: Premature Mortality Due to Particulate Air Pollution in 239 American Cities*. Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), 1996. NRDC applied the findings of a 1995 study conducted by Harvard University Medical School and the American Cancer Society to local data.
3. *Greening Freight*, op cit.
4. NYC Economic Development Corporation, work in progress.
5. "Port of L.A. Launches Clean Engines, Fuels Effort" CALSTART News Notes, April 9, 1999.

California initiated the LNG-based Interstate Clean Transportation Corridor, LA to Salt Lake City to San Francisco, that provides LNG for trucks along the interstate highways. See U. S. Dept. of Energy Clean Cities internet site for Texas port info: <http://www.ccities.doe.gov/>

6. Northeast Transportation Institute, "Connecticut ITS/CVO Business Plan: Final Report" Prepared for the State of CT, June, 1998.