

READY FOR MORE? TEN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONNECTICUT

Here are our top ten state policy recommendations that will get us on track for a better transportation system for Connecticut.

1. Develop a coordinated plan for a balanced, inter-modal transportation system.

As gas prices continue to rise, consumers are looking for other, cheaper ways to get around. Research shows that the millennial and baby boomer generations are moving away from car ownership and want to live near transit or walkable communities. It is time for Connecticut to invest in an inter-modal transportation system to provide more transportation options at a lower cost for people and the environment.

Connecting bus routes to train stations, airports and employment hubs is an efficient way to move people to and from less densely populated areas. And connecting neighborhoods to transit stations and bus stops through safe sidewalks and bike lanes allows those who want to leave the car at home to do so. Connecticut should:

- Develop a comprehensive state wide approach to prioritize projects that connect bus, rail, airports, and biking and walking within regional corridors.
- Invest in public transit and bike-pedestrian capital projects.
- Develop an access strategy for transit stations that accommodates pedestrians, bicycle riders and drivers.
- Develop a way to measure the DOT's performance and use of sustainable forms of transportation, including how street design and operations affect different groups of users modeled after New York City's Sustainable Street Index

2. Adopt policies to shift trips from single-occupancy vehicles to alternative modes.

Multiple departments within the state influence how developers and property owners manage access to their properties and the

resulting impact on the state's transportation system. The Office of the State Traffic Administration has the responsibility to review the traffic impacts of developments abutting state roads. The review process is an opportunity for the state to promote innovative ways for businesses to reduce single passenger car trips while improving access for pedestrians and transit riders. The Department of Economic and Community Development provides grants and loans to businesses and development proposals in areas with transit access near existing jobs and residents. Management of state owned properties should encourage access by transit such as providing subsidized transit passes. Connecticut should:

- Reform the Office of the State Traffic Administration's review of traffic impacts of developments abutting state roads. Require transportation demand management tools to reduce vehicle trips generated by new development while improving access for pedestrians and transit riders.
- Implement policies for all state agencies that include incentives for transit-use, carpooling, and biking and walking to work while limiting or eliminating free employee parking.

3. Support transit-oriented development.

If Connecticut focuses future development, especially housing, jobs and services within one-half mile of existing public transit, we can increase livability and affordability for all residents, including young professionals, senior citizens, and low income earners. This will also reduce the negative environmental impacts of current development approaches and maximize use of the current transportation infrastructure. Doing this will help reduce the sprawl consuming our remaining open space. New Jersey's Transit Village program is a successful model of how to incentivize development near transportation.

Connecticut should:

- Develop a state-wide Transit Oriented Development (TOD) plan and policy with interagency collaboration between the Department of Transportation, Department of Economic and Community Development, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority and Office of Policy and Management, to prioritize TOD projects and direct state resources toward such projects in a systematic, coordinated and effective manner.

- Provide technical assistance to facilitate TOD to municipalities that meet certain defined criteria for equitable TOD projects. Such assistance should include educating the citizens, town planners and the elected officials, and providing local land use commissions the tools and expertise they need to adjust their zoning codes and finance appropriate development.
- Provide dedicated funding through the Bonding Commission for transit-oriented development projects on a predictable basis rather than on a project-by-project basis.
- Designate priority funding areas under the State Plan of Conservation and Development based substantially upon areas most suited for transit oriented development.

4. Implement green infrastructure best practices.

Cost effective techniques to reduce impervious coverage, better manage stormwater runoff, reduce the amount of surface parking, and modify street widths, are having success in Connecticut, but need to be applied more widely. In the long term these techniques have a significant net economic and environmental benefit. Along appropriate roads, we can install swales and basins with plantings to naturally filter rainwater and let it soak back into the ground. This saves resources by reducing the amount of concrete drainage piping we need to build and by reducing the amount of water that goes through water treatment plants and can help to reduce flooding of rivers. Establishing non-buildable buffer areas between paved areas and nearby water resources preserves water quality. Natural buffers filter out pollutants, reduce erosion and provide healthy habitat. Massachusetts requires a 200 foot buffer, and some states protect even more. Connecticut should:

- Develop a Green Infrastructure set of procedures to be used by DOT during the planning, design and construction of all transportation projects.
- Adopt a statewide minimum 100 foot buffer along streams, rivers and wetlands.
- Set a statewide impervious coverage standard to be applied on a watershed-wide basis in the State Plan of Conservation and Development.
- Assess the impacts of developments abutting state roadways on the surrounding watershed area as part of the traffic study submitted to the Office of the State Traffic Administration.

5. Fix-it-First.

The cost of maintaining Connecticut's roads and bridges requires hundreds of millions of dollars annually to get them to a state of good repair. Building new roads is costly, time and land-consuming and often does not solve congestion problems. Repairing existing roads and bridges instead of building new roads is more economical and improves our safety when using them. Connecticut should:

- Direct existing highway funds to repair and maintain our roads and bridges as a first priority over road or bridge expansion.
- New highway projects should only be considered if they are accompanied by new funding sources such as tolls that encourage alternative transportation such as buses, and reduce traffic through congestion pricing.

6. Develop stable sources of funding for transportation.

Transportation costs for the state are unsustainable through current funding methods. Connecticut is getting less money from the federal government and yet we need to make investments in order to stay competitive and to preserve our quality of life. The state needs to identify new sources of revenue that once collected will be dedicated to funding the state's transportation system. Market incentives to reduce automobile usage, such as insurance pricing based on miles driven and congestion pricing need to be seriously considered. Public-private partnerships for improving our transportation system should be explored. And how we leverage and prioritize those funds needs to be reviewed within the context of fix-it-first, and investing in public transit and bike and pedestrian improvements.

Connecticut should:

- Maintain current percentage of state transportation budget for public transit.
- Maintain current percentage of state transportation budget for bike and pedestrian projects.
- Keep transit fares affordable.
- Identify new sources of revenue to dedicate to the Special Transportation Fund i.e. congestion pricing, increase gas tax, or transfer car sales tax from the General Fund to the Special Transportation Fund.

7. Make walking and biking easier and safer with low-cost and small-scale improvements.

In 2009, Connecticut enacted the Complete Streets law that requires the state and municipalities to dedicate 1% of new transportation projects funded by the state to go to bike and pedestrian improvements. Unfortunately the actual implementation of this law is inconsistent and funding is frequently dropped from projects due to budgetary concerns. Enhancements for walking, biking and wheelchair use should be an immediate priority. Bike lanes, pedestrian crossings and multiuse trails are less expensive, quicker to build and healthier than new roads. Biking initiatives have made Portland (OR), Minneapolis, and Pittsburgh more vibrant and livable.

Connecticut should:

- Ensure all municipalities abide by the Complete Streets law so that at least 1% of DOT funding for new or retrofit projects is directed to bike and pedestrian improvements. Additional bike and pedestrian protections, such as the adoption of a Vulnerable User law, that would penalize reckless drivers who seriously injure people who are using the roads responsibly for biking or walking, would be another step towards a better and balanced transportation system.
- Dedicate an equitable and predictable funding stream for bike and pedestrian programs in the state's transportation budget.
- Invest in multi-use trails that connect our cities and towns, such as the East Coast Greenway.
- Incorporate bike lanes, sharrows, or bike boxes when planning for new streets or when re-paving streets.
- Implement "Safe Routes to School" and "Safe Routes for Seniors" programs in municipalities to facilitate walking by children and seniors.

8. Improve and expand bus transit while holding the line on the fares.

Bus service is the backbone of Connecticut's public transit system, serving both those who depend on it and those who prefer it. The newest type of bus service, bus rapid transit, uses a dedicated travel-way for buses to efficiently transport people along an exclusive route with a limited number of stops. Because the buses bypass congested roads, it is quicker and cheaper than driving a car. Connecticut has recently funded

the first bus rapid transit in Connecticut, the New Britain-Hartford Busway renamed *CTfastrak*. It will transport riders from the New Britain area and ten intermediate stops toward Hartford, ending at the Union Station transit hub. There, passengers can connect to other buses and trains including, eventually, trains to Springfield, New Haven and onward to New York, Boston and Washington when the proposed New Haven-Hartford-Springfield rail line is completed. As these connectivity improvements are made, public transit becomes easier and more popular.

Connecticut should:

- Expand bus routes identified in the Transit for Connecticut 2010 "Missing Links" study done by Regional Plan Association. This report lists specific corridors and routes where adding transit service would be most effective.
- Implement real-time bus location system to provide schedule certainty and increase safety and convenience. The location data can also be made available to third party developers for smartphone apps.
- Keep fares affordable.
- Implement pre-board fare collection by installing kiosks at bus stops to buy the bus ticket and utilize "reloadable" fare cards that can be swiped when entering the bus. This will speed up bus service and reduce idling time of buses.
- Dedicate existing highway lanes for buses only. It's as simple as painting bus lanes on existing highway lanes and adding signage. Buses will move people faster thereby attracting more riders.
- Install signal prioritization. This new technology utilizes a system to hold green lights for buses and minimize the time the bus idles at a red light. Speed and efficiency is critical to attracting new bus riders.
- Improve transit websites to be more user-friendly and consistent to make transit travel easier and to increase ridership. A single statewide website that includes, or links, to all the many transit entities to allow a customer to type in a starting point, departure time and destination, and receive a travel plan using the bus and/or the train, including fare information and arrival time, is needed.
- Ensure adequate funding for Dial-A-Ride as it provides our seniors with transportation for medical appointments and community events, a service that enables many seniors to continue living independently.

9. Invest in rail.

Given today's security requirements at airports and regular flight delays, imagine getting on a high speed train in Hartford and four hours later being in the center of Washington DC versus traveling to the airport, arriving two hours early, getting your flight, arriving outside the city, renting a car or taking an expensive taxi ride to the center of the city and potentially sitting in traffic on both trips to and from the airport. In the densely populated northeast, high speed rail just makes sense. And for commuters, rail service is a cheaper, more efficient option than commuting by car especially in Fairfield County. MetroNorth is the busiest commuter rail line in the country serving over 36 million riders annually. While MetroNorth is critical for economic development for Fairfield County businesses, Shore Line East provides commuter service to New Haven and onward and is also beneficial to the tourism business in southeast Connecticut. Investing in rail is an investment in our economy. Connecticut should:

- Continue to invest in the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield high speed rail line and the planning for transit-oriented development around the stations, recognizing that each station must be developed within the context of that particular community.
- Improve and increase capacity of the New Haven Line by planning and providing dedicated funding for repair of the aging, movable bridges, enhancement of the stations and parking facilities, and roll out of the M8 rail cars.
- Invest in and upgrade existing rail lines with priority given to those areas with highest potential for transit oriented development within one half mile of the rail stations.
- Support bus expansion for better connection with passenger rail stations.
- Improve communications with the public by investing in technology for real time information, consolidating website information, and making it easier for riders to find out about delays or cancellations.
- Implement a consistent policy to allow bike racks on trains and provide safe bike racks, lockers and shelters at the stations.

10. Incentivize clean fuel options.

Although a transit-based strategy will reduce the number of vehicles necessary for Connecticut residents, many will find that they still need personal vehicles to achieve all their travel needs. There are ways the state can encourage citizens to buy fuel efficient cars that burn cleaner fuel or use alternative energy sources. Connecticut should:

- Develop a state-wide plan with guidelines and incentives for 21st Century infrastructure for electric and natural gas cars and trucks including charging stations.
- Continue to require stringent fuel economy standards following California's lead.
- Support additional incentives for hybrids and electric vehicles, such as reinstating the hybrid car tax rebate.
- Implement policies to incentivize state employees to use public transit.
- Invest in clean fuel fleets for state vehicles.

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