

1999 CPTC ANNUAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3. THE COMMISSION NOTES THE CONTINUED ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF NEW EMPLOYEES ENTERING THE WORKFORCE AND APPLAUDS THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TAKEN IN THE VARIOUS REGIONS OF THE STATE TO IDENTIFY EMPLOYMENT SITES NEEDING TRANSIT ACCESS, EMPLOYEES NEEDING TRANSIT SERVICES, AND THE MOST EXPEDITIOUS WAY TO MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO. FUNDING FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES INCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES, THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION AND EVEN PRIVATE EMPLOYERS, SUPPLEMENTING EXISTING OPERATING FUNDING FROM CONNDOT AND OTHER OPERATORS IS BEING MANAGED IN A COORDINATED FASHION TO PROVIDE THE GREATEST LEVEL OF SERVICE THAT THE EXISTING FUNDING, FROM THESE MULTIPLE SOURCES, CAN SUPPORT.

THE COMMISSION RECOGNIZES THE ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL NATURE OF TRANSPORTATION IN SECURING AND MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT, PARTICULARLY FOR THOSE ENTERING THE WORKFORCE FOR THE FIRST TIME. AS WE CLOSE 1999, ADEQUATE FUNDING APPEARS TO BE IN PLACE TO SUSTAIN JOBS ACCESS TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS IN MOST OF THE STATE THROUGH MID-2001. HOWEVER, WE URGE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO TAKE CONTINUED NOTE OF THE DIRECT LINKAGE BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS) FUNDING SAVINGS AS PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT, AND THE ADEQUATE FUNDING OF THE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THE EMPLOYMENT OF LOW INCOME AND TRANSIT DEPENDENT WORKERS.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:

The Department is pleased to be involved in efforts to match low-income workers with jobs and has been involved in a facilitation role for several years. The award of a competitive grant for nearly \$3 million from the Federal Transit Administration has recently expanded the Department's role. The grant application contained five regional plans, representing a massive effort by each regional collaborative, which the Department then organized into a statewide plan and combined with a Department piece for a single grant application.

One purpose for the statewide grant application was to attempt to balance the overall funding available in the state. Two regions are not receiving TEIP funds, but instead a compilation of funds from Social Services Block Grant, Welfare to Work and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. While transportation is a valid use for these funds, the way in which these funds must be used is restrictive by requiring close tracking of who is using the transportation service and for what purpose. This

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE: (# 3 cont.)

makes it difficult, near to impossible to use these funds for fixed route service and requires the use of a broker as a gatekeeper to determine eligibility.

The Department attempted to balance these restrictive funds with FTA funds in order to make the overall pot of funding in these regions more flexible. When eastern Connecticut was prohibited from receiving FTA funds, the region was left with a very restricted program that the Department again attempted to abate by making a small amount of state funding available for more flexible use.

The Commission report states that funding appears to be in place for these services through Mid-2001. Services operating with FTA funds began in the fall of 1999. These funds are expected to last for 12 to 15 months in the different regions. In order to obtain additional FTA funding, the Department and the regions would need to reapply and compete for a pool of federal funds that has been greatly reduced due to earmarking. The Department of Social Services contracts with each region will expire on either June or December 2000 depending on the region. While additional funding was allocated to the TEIP in the fiscal year 2000 and 2001 budgets, that funding has been cut for the current year.

Job Access transportation services are generally open to the public and by targeting shift times, may help to reduce peak hour congestion. Job Access services benefit the business community by making more workers available and providing reliable transportation. Existing funds are temporary. In order to sustain the success of these transportation programs in gaining access to jobs and job-related activities for low-income workers and people coming off assistance a more permanent source of funds should be allocated.