

## **1999 CPTC ANNUAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

16. THE COMMISSION AGAIN STRONGLY ENDORSES THE REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION OF THE RAIL LINE EXTENDING FROM THE MIDDLETOWN/CROMWELL LINE TO HARTFORD (MP 15 TO MP2.2). THE COMMISSION ACKNOWLEDGES THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO DATE IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT, INCLUDING CONNDOT'S PROVISION OF TIES AND RAIL, AS WELLAS THE REBUILDING OF CERTAIN CROSSINGS ON WHICH IT HAD PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED THE REMOVAL OF TRACK.

### **DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:**

CDOT staff reviewed the Providence and Worcester Railroad's (P&W) "Confidential Business Plan for the Wethersfield Secondary Rail Line" to determine if an investment by CDOT of nearly \$2 million for the restoration of the line is responsible and if such an expenditure could be prioritized among the projects contained in the Bureau of Public Transportation's Capital Project Management Plan. This review resulted in a consensus that the P&W's Business Plan for this line is speculative and that a commitment from an "anchor" rail user on the line is conspicuously absent. Therefore, it was determined that the restoration of this line is insufficient in its priority to defer existing state-of-good-repair projects on existing transportation systems.

It bears repeating that CDOT has a well documented history of supporting rail freight service throughout the state. Under the Rail Preservation and Improvement Program, modest capital improvement grants continue to be awarded to railroad companies to effect improvements on in-service lines. Over the years, railroad companies have been forgiven millions of dollars in gross receipts taxes for completing pre-approved capital or accelerated maintenance projects in accordance with the Gross Receipts Tax Exemption Program. Additionally, CDOT has donated tens of thousands of relay ties and miles of rail to railroad companies for installation on their lines in Connecticut. Specifically, in addition to providing over one million dollars to effect repairs to the Middletown/Portland railroad bridge, CDOT has given the P&W well over 20,000 relay ties and several miles of rail specifically for installation on the Wethersfield Secondary Rail Line.

Based upon the current Special Tax Obligation Bond Fund authorization level, the project to restore the Wethersfield Secondary Line still lacks sufficient merit to assume priority in the existing Capital Project Management Plan. It is CDOT's recommendation that the P&W, affected municipalities and various private entities who would benefit from this rail freight service develop a private/public partnership to effect funding for this project.