

1. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THE FUNDING OF A STATE MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM FOR DIAL-A-RIDE AT A LEVEL OF \$5 MILLION DOLLARS. DIAL-A-RIDE SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND SENIORS ARE FACING A FUNDING CRISIS DUE TO A GROWING LOSS OF FEDERAL FUNDS.

Dial-a-Ride services provide a means of independent living for seniors and persons with disabilities in rural and suburban areas lacking traditional public transit services. The services are commonly used for basic needs including medical appointments, employment and shopping.

Dial-a-Ride allows people to age in place, giving them a better quality of life. Without Dial-a-Ride, persons without cars would have to rely on friends and relatives, non-wheelchair accessible taxicabs (if available), or, in the case of medical appointments, on costly ambulances.

Most municipalities in the state have totally lost access to federal Dial-a-Ride operating funds due to their reclassification into large urbanized areas by the federal government, since the FTA does not provide operating assistance for Dial-a-Ride services in areas exceeding 200,000 in population. To address the loss of federal funds, in SFY 1999, the General Assembly appropriated \$2.5 million from the *Special Transportation Fund* to a Dial-a-Ride line item in the Connecticut Department of Transportation budget to operate demand responsive services in five transit districts in the large urbanized areas of Bridgeport, New Haven, and Hartford. After the 2000 census, Norwalk, Stamford, New Britain and Bristol lost use of federal funds as well when they were reclassified into large urbanized areas.

The State funding level for the Dial-a-Ride line item has not increased even as more and more municipalities have lost federal funds. Further complicating matters, ConnDOT has been forced to use this Dial-a-Ride line item to support underfunded ADA paratransit services statewide. As a consequence, the use of State funding for Dial-a-Ride has almost disappeared. Many programs have been severely cut back or eliminated.

Existing statutes (CGS 13b-38bb), passed in 1999, provide a mechanism for grants to municipalities statewide that provide or support Dial-a-Ride services. Since the General Assembly has never appropriated the funds for the matching grants, this important program has never been implemented.

The Commission recommends a funding level of \$5 million for statewide Dial-a-Ride as proposed when the legislation passed in FY 1999.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) supports the Commission's recommendation to fund a State matching grant program for demand-responsive services with several conditions.

It needs to be made clear that the Commission's recommendation refers to the municipal grant program described in CGS 13b-38bb and is not recommending supplemental funding for the existing Dial-a-Ride appropriation in ConnDOT's annual budget. The existing program has very specific funding restrictions.

The statute requires that funding for the municipal grant program described in CGS 13b-38bb be appropriated from the General Fund. Appropriating these funds from the Special Transportation Fund (STF) would effectively only offset some other program already funded from the STF.

The grants awarded under this program must provide transportation services in addition to any services currently being provided by or to the municipalities. A 100 percent non-state, non-federal match is required for this grant program. In addition, one of the key criteria for eligibility within this program will be service coordination with existing transportation services and with neighboring towns in the region.

Linking this recommendation to a “funding crisis” caused by changes in the federal funding formula or changes in funding splits within ConnDOT’s Dial-a-Ride program can be somewhat misleading. Most municipalities potentially receiving aid under this municipal grant program have never received federal transit operating assistance or Dial-a-Ride funding. Some municipalities will continue to receive federal operating assistance and Dial-a-Ride funding even if this grant program is funded.

2. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT A FUNDING PLAN BE DEVELOPED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE 342 NEW RAILCARS WHICH WILL SERVE AS THE NEXT GENERATION OF NEW HAVEN LINE EQUIPMENT, AND FOR THE NEW MAINTENANCE FACILITY NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THESE CARS.

The New Haven Line service of Metro-North carries 110,000 passengers per weekday, or over 33,000,000 trips per year. The majority of the existing equipment in the fleet consists of 241 M-2 cars placed into service in 1973-1976 and now at or over their 30-year design life. The current M-2 overhaul program will buy a few years of extra service for this equipment, but the process of acquiring the next generation of equipment needs to be put in motion now, or the quality, and quantity, of service provided will be in significant jeopardy.

The Rail Car Fleet Replacement Plan developed by ConnDOT and the Office of Policy and Management anticipates the purchase of 342 cars of electrical multiple unit (EMU) design, which would be the updated version of the current class of New Haven Line equipment. This number of new cars will replace the current 28,000 seats of the 241 M-2 cars to be retired and will also accommodate the long-term annual ridership growth which has averaged 1.5% annually. These cars will cost approximately \$3,000,000 each, of which 65% would be paid for by the State of Connecticut, with the remaining 35% paid for by New York. Thus, Connecticut’s share of the \$1.026 billion cost for these cars is \$667,000,000. The new multi-purpose maintenance facility to be constructed at New Haven to service these cars will cost an estimated \$350,000,000. Therefore, Connecticut’s total price tag for the equipment and maintenance facility will be approximately \$1.02 billion.

Last winter provided a dramatic wake up call revealing the consequences of severe winter weather on our aging New Haven Line car fleet. At its worst point, 140 cars out of the 343 car fleet were unavailable for service last winter. This left the New Haven Line well short of the

minimum of 266 available cars needed to maintain the current service. A reoccurrence of last year's winter conditions can be expected, unfortunately, to lead to a repeat of these hardships.

\$1.02 billion is a large amount of money. Raising this amount of money will likely require use of new or increased sources of funding, or a combination of funding sources. Due to the lead times involved in car procurement, including design and specifications development, the initiation of the procurement process today would not yield the first of the new equipment until 2010. Therefore, the Commission urges that the necessary financing plan be developed now, and that all sources of funding be considered, alone or in combination, including increase fares, bonding, a gas tax hike or a durational sales tax increment.

The Commission further recommends that the New Haven Line Fleet Configuration Analysis and the New Haven Line Rail Car Fleet Replacement Plan, or summaries thereof, be made available for public review, followed by public hearings. The fleet replacement decision has long-term, multi-decade implications for Connecticut. Rail commuters, and taxpayers as a whole, should have the highest level of confidence in the chosen course of action. Such hearings would provide an opportunity to publicly compare the selected electrical multiple unit (EMU) car technology with that of other options, including the use of bi-level coaches with a locomotive at each end, in terms of performance, comfort, seating capacity, operational considerations and life cycle costs. These hearing could also be used to build public support for the necessary revenue raising steps to be taken to fund the equipment purchase.

ConnDOT supports the Commission's recommendation that a funding plan be developed for the purchase of approximately 342 new electric multiple unit (EMU) rail cars and the construction of a new maintenance facility to adequately service the new fleet. When the Governor and the Legislature reach agreement on a funding plan for the EMU's and the maintenance facility, ConnDOT will notice and conduct public informational meetings on this subject. As is ConnDOT's practice, informational summaries will be available to the public in advance of ConnDOT meetings.

3. THE COMMISSION COMMENDS CONNDOT ON THE ACQUISITION OF 33 RAILCARS FROM VIRGINIA RAIL EXPRESS (VRE) WHICH WILL PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL AND MUCH NEEDED 4,052 SEATS OF CAPACITY FOR CONNECTICUT COMMUTERS. THESE CARS, SOME OF WHICH ARE ALREADY BEING PLACED INTO SERVICE, WILL BE USED ON SHORE LINE EAST, AND ON THE WATERBURY AND DANBURY BRANCHES, FREEING UP EQUIPMENT CURRENTLY USED ON THOSE SERVICES FOR THE NEW HAVEN LINE. THOUGH THESE VRE CARS ARE ONLY A FIRST STEP IN MEETING THE ROLLING STOCK NEEDS OF THE NEW HAVEN LINE, THEY ARE A WELCOME AND TIMELY IMPROVEMENT, ESPECIALLY HEADING INTO THE WINTER SEASON WHEN WEATHER-RELATED EQUIPMENT OUTAGES PUT AN ADDITIONAL STRAIN ON SEATING CAPACITY.

4. THE COMMISSION AGAIN COMMENDS CONNDOT FOR UNDERTAKING THE NEW HAVEN–HARTFORD–SPRINGFIELD COMMUTER RAIL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, AND IT ENCOURAGES THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO MOVE FORWARD WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS SERVICE. THE COMMISSION ENDORSES THE STUDY’S SELECTION OF A REASONABLE, MID-RANGE OPTION AS THE PREFERRED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN. THE RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION OPTION IS CONSISTENT WITH THE GUIDANCE EXPRESSED IN THE COMMISSION’S 2003 ANNUAL REPORT.

The Commission has long advocated the operation of commuter rail service between New Haven, Hartford and Springfield on Amtrak’s Springfield Line. In October 2002, the Transportation Strategy Board authorized \$2,000,000 in funding to undertake a study of the capital needs, ridership levels and operating costs involved in providing such service. As an initial planning exercise, the study consultants looked at what were called the Minimum Build and Maximum Build scenarios to determine the bounds of the possible capital and operating costs for implementing such a service.

The recommended implementation option includes seven new ConnDOT-funded trains per day in each direction between New Haven and Springfield, which when combined with the existing eight Amtrak trains in each direction, will provide for service every 30 minutes during the peak morning and afternoon commuting hours. Service would be provided to the nine existing stations from New Haven to Springfield, including the State Street Station in New Haven at which Amtrak service does not currently stop. New stations would also be built at North Haven, Newington and Enfield. Double tracking will be added in 5 locations totaling 18 miles along the corridor to increase operating flexibility. For this recommended level of service, capital costs are estimated at \$263.3 million, while operating costs would be \$10.1 million annually, of which \$1.2 million would be recovered through fares. Estimated new ridership of 2,428 daily trips is anticipated in this scenario.

The Commission eagerly awaits the release of the final report of this study in early 2005. The Commission again thanks the Transportation Strategy Board for providing the funding to prepare this implementation strategy and begin the process for achieving commuter service in this corridor.

The final report of the New Haven - Hartford - Springfield Commuter Rail Implementation Plan is currently being prepared. Publication is anticipated by March 2005. In order to implement the rail commuter service as suggested, additional funding will be needed to conduct environmental studies and preliminary engineering, construct the recommended infrastructure, purchase the needed equipment and provide the estimated operating subsidy.

5. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT IMPROVED PROCEDURES, STAFFING OR NEW TECHNOLOGIES BE PUT IN PLACE TO ENHANCE THE COLLECTION OF FARES ON THE NEW HAVEN LINE.

A consistent stream of observations by many New Haven Line riders has testified to a persistent problem with the non-collection of fares, particularly for shorter intrastate trips and particularly in the PM commuting peak. Some evidence suggests that the level of fare evasion, either intention or unintentional, is significant. Not all of the uncollected fares translate into lost revenue, but a large percentage does. With another fare increase due to be implemented in January 2005, responsible administration of the New Haven Line service must include every effort to assure that each fare is properly collected, both for the integrity of the revenue stream and out of fairness to honest commuters who pay their fares.

This issue is not a new one. The Commission and the Department have been aware of the non-collection of fares for at least a couple of decades. However, the problem is becoming much more prevalent, especially with the increase in intrastate travel and its shorter trips. Frequently the uncollected tickets are turned in for cash refunds. Whether through more diligent use of seat checks, enhanced Metro-North staffing on some trains, or the introduction of new fare collection technologies, a crackdown on nonpayment of fares must be implemented on New Haven Line trains. The Commission encourages ConnDOT to continue to pursue this issue with Metro-North, recognizing that any improvements must be implemented systemwide, not just in Connecticut.

ConnDOT and Metro-North Railroad are committed to the proper collection of rail fares. Metro-North uses a combination of company and independent auditors riding trains to monitor conductor fare collection. In addition, they have a fare collection task force that meets regularly to assess lost fare revenue and to identify methods to reduce it. The task force also recommends conductor staff levels to optimize coverage on each train and works to identify cost-effective technologies that might improve fare collection.

The average distance between stations on the New Haven Line is 2.4 miles. Due to the short distance between stations, it is a challenge to collect every fare, especially for intermediate travel. Circumstances such as excessive on-board ticket sales, high ridership volume, and occasional enroute distractions act to prevent the train crew from making full collections through every car between stops. The institution of incentives for buying tickets using ticket vending machines and multi-ride ticket discounting is expected to increasingly reduce the volume of on-board sales, and to further assist the collection of tickets and revenue. ConnDOT and Metro-North continue to work toward tightening revenue capture, and appreciate CPTC's support on this issue.

6. THE COMMISSION URGES THE DEPARTMENT TO SUPPORT THE NEW YORK CROSS HARBOR RAIL FREIGHT TUNNEL PROJECT. THIS PROJECT WOULD PROVIDE VASTLY IMPROVED RAIL ACCESS INTO THE NEW YORK CITY METROPOLITAN AREA AND INTO CONNECTICUT AND SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND, IMPROVING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF RAIL FOR SHIPMENT OF FREIGHT, LOWERING OVERALL TRANSPORTATION COSTS AND REMOVING A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF TRUCKS FROM OUR CONGESTED HIGHWAYS. THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THIS PROJECT IS BEING UNDERTAKEN IN 2005.

For many years, this Commission has recommended that the State of Connecticut adopt a pro-active policy to encourage rail intermodal freight into and through the state, especially along the New Haven Line of Metro-North and on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, to directly compete with truck traffic on Interstate 95. The growing support for, and opportunity provided by, the New York Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel offers a unique public benefit for the state of Connecticut, and is a prime example of the type of pro-rail freight initiative that this State should be advocating for and participating in. The Commission strongly believes that the growing traffic and congestion on Connecticut's Interstate highways, especially on Interstate 95, much of which is due to tractor-trailer traffic, demands a change in current state transportation policy.

Two recent studies highlight the problem. The U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, in a November 19, 2003 report on the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, cites the statistic that between 1990 and 2000, U.S. truck travel increased by 38 percent. It projects that in the next 20 years, truck travel will increase by another 90 percent. Similarly, a recent study commissioned by AASHTO, entitled Freight Rail Bottom Line Report concludes that freight volumes are about to explode in the nation, particularly around urban areas like New York. It predicts that domestic freight tonnage will increase by 57% by 2020, and import-export tonnage will increase by 100% by that year. Assuming no change in modal choices, by 2020 the highway system must carry an additional 6,600 million tons of freight, an increase of 62%.

Highway congestion improvements underway or planned for Interstates 84 and 95 will provide brief, temporary congestion relief. Only a long-term policy change toward rail freight, taken in cooperation with neighboring states, will begin to address the highway congestion problem.

ConnDOT has participated in the review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel Project. ConnDOT recognizes the need to move goods by means other than trucks. ConnDOT also recognizes the anticipated benefits this initiative could have for eastern New York State. ConnDOT is of the understanding that with a double tunnel system, two existing freight trains would be lengthened and three new freight trains would be added to the New Haven Line during an off-peak period. The future growth of commuter rail operations on the New Haven Line will likely require that all maintenance and construction activities take place in off-peak periods, which could preclude any new freight services. ConnDOT has suggested that a cost benefit analysis be conducted of routing freight trains up the Hudson Corridor to

Selkirk and then east to Worcester as opposed to the New Haven Line to Worcester route. In addition, ConnDOT has relayed concern that the expenditure of \$7.4 billion for a double tunnel system that has no noticeable benefits to traffic levels on I-95 in Connecticut may adversely impact the region's ability to secure future federal funding for other more needed transportation infrastructure improvement projects.

7. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT IDENTIFICATION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASING THE CAPACITY FOR TRUCKS AT THE REST AREAS ALONG CONNECTICUT'S INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS SHOULD BE A MAJOR THRUST OF CONNDOT'S UPCOMING STATEWIDE REST AREA AND SERVICE PLAZA STUDY.

ConnDOT will be undertaking a yearlong Statewide Rest Area and Service Plaza Study during 2005 to prepare a master plan governing roadside rest areas and service plazas. The study will evaluate the existing network of roadside facilities and consider options to optimize these facilities. Such options will include reconfiguring, expanding, combining, relocating, adding or eliminating facilities. The impetus for this study is guidance the Department has received from the Federal Highway Administration that money to finance rest area and service plaza improvements is likely to be available in the new reauthorization act, and those states having a master plan in place to direct such improvements would be eligible for this funding.

The Commission urges that a strong emphasis in this study effort be placed upon identifying opportunities to address the shortage of truck parking spaces in Connecticut. This deficit was estimated to be 1,200 spaces in the 2001 ConnDOT Truck Stop and Rest Area Parking Study, and was predicted to grow to 1,600 spaces by 2020. This situation can lead to several undesirable and unsafe consequences including having truck drivers continue to drive in a fatigued state, having trucks parking in undesignated or unsafe locations, or having existing rest areas and service plazas become overly congested to the point where emergency vehicles or other traffic cannot safely access those areas.

The 2001 ConnDOT study identified an additional 638 truck parking spaces that could be added at 14 existing public rest areas along Interstates 84, 91, 95 and 395. The new study should revisit these possible expansions. However, it should also look beyond these existing properties to identify other suitable sites for new facilities. With the projected increases in the volume of truck traffic, which the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has estimated to increase by 90% by the year 2020, the need for additional rest area capacity for trucks is only going to become more pressing. ConnDOT's efforts to address this issue are indeed timely, and are strongly encouraged by the Commission.

ConnDOT agrees with the Commission that truck parking capacity is a major issue along Connecticut's Interstate highways. The 18-month Rest Areas and Service Plazas Study Statewide soon to be undertaken by ConnDOT will look at ways of optimizing overall capacity and operations (including truck parking capacity) at existing locations, as well as potential expansion of some locations, relocation or elimination of some sites, and

potential construction of additional sites. This is being done to better serve and improve safety for the motoring public in general.

8. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT, WHEN CORRIDOR STUDIES ARE UNDERTAKEN TO IDENTIFY THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS ALONG MAJOR ARTERIES, THE TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT PACKAGES THAT ARE DEVELOPED FOR ANALYSIS SHOULD NOT BE DISMISSED IN TOTALITY SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY CANNOT MEET 100% OF THE TRAVEL DEMANDS IN THE CORRIDOR. RATHER, THE MOST PROMISING OF THE TRANSIT ENHANCEMENTS SHOULD BE INCORPORATED INTO THE HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS TO PRESENT A COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE OF TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS FOR THAT CORRIDOR, THEREBY SERVING ALL THE RESIDENTS AND TRAVELERS IN THE STUDY AREA.

During the last 10 years, ConnDOT has undertaken a number of corridor studies to assess the current conditions, projected travel demands, existing and future deficiencies and potential improvements in various transportation corridors. Examples of such studies include those done for the Hartford West Corridor (Hartford to Farmington), the Southwest and Southeast Corridor studies (New Haven to Greenwich and Branford to Rhode Island, respectively), and corridor studies for Interstate 84 east and west of Waterbury and in the Danbury area. After determining the travel needs and deficiencies in the specific corridors, a range of alternatives is generally developed and then evaluated to assess how well each option would meet the travel needs of that corridor.

Typically the alternatives developed for evaluation include several expansion options for the Interstate highway. These may include the addition of general purpose lanes, high occupancy vehicle lanes, substantial improvements to interchanges, and a low capital alternative of spot improvements. Generally, a transit-based alternative is also developed to analyze the number of trips that may be diverted from the highway or accommodated more efficiently on the highway by transit. Finally, a 'no action' alternative is evaluated to serve as a baseline.

In several of the more recent corridor studies such as the Southeast Corridor Study for I-95 from Branford to Rhode Island done in 2003-2004, as well as the Interstate 84 Waterbury to Southington study, once the evaluation of transit alternatives had determined that they were not capable of diverting enough trips to obviate the need for expansion of the highway, the transit alternatives were then dismissed in their entirety. None of the transit alternative elements were incorporated into the final recommended project. This contrasts with the examples set in some earlier corridor studies where elements of the transit package were incorporated with the highway improvements to benefit a broader section of the traveling public. In the New Haven Harbor Crossing Study for replacement of the Quinnipiac River Bridge, the new State Street railroad station in New Haven was incorporated as a project element amongst the larger package of improvements including the new Quinnipiac River Bridge and expansion of adjoining sections of Interstate 95. In the Hartford West Major Investment Study of 1999, the New Britain-Hartford Busway was selected as part of the hybrid package of alternatives that incorporated improvements to Interstate 84 and the Routes 4, 6 and 9 interchanges.

These two examples demonstrate a more balanced program of corridor improvements. The Commission well recognizes that the level of transit improvements that may be worthwhile will vary from corridor to corridor, with the New Britain Busway representing an example at the upper end of the spectrum. However, it does not argue well for providing a balanced range of transportation services when the identified potential transit enhancements package is dismissed in its entirety. The Commission therefore recommends that the most promising elements of any corridor transit enhancement package be incorporated into the eventual recommended corridor improvement package, even if transit enhancements cannot solve the totality of the travel needs in the study corridor.

ConnDOT recognizes that the mobility needs of travelers within and through the State must be met through a balanced transportation system, consisting of bus and rail transit, air, water and roadway options. It is not the intent to dismiss completely transit options that may contribute to the overall improvement of a transportation corridor. In cases where transit has been identified as a transportation component that has a measurable benefit to diverting lone auto use, such options have been pursued either as part of an overall corridor transportation plan or as a separate initiative. ConnDOT will give greater attention to identifying beneficial transit options as part of corridor transportation improvement recommendations in future corridor studies.

9. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT CONNDOT GIVE FULL CONSIDERATION TO A PROPOSAL FROM THE ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT FOR ENHANCED CROSS RIVER SERVICE TO PROVIDE A CONNECTION WITH THE SOUTHEAST AREA TRANSIT DISTRICT AT NIAN TIC.

The Connecticut River Estuary Transit District is working with the Southeast Area Transit District (SEAT) to develop a proposal to link their systems at Niantic. SEAT currently serves Niantic while the Estuary Transit District service extends only to Old Lyme. Estuary T.D. proposes to run the Niantic route on two-hour headways and would require at least one additional vehicle to operate the route.

Development of this proposal is not yet complete and ridership projections have not yet been performed. This route would serve to provide access to Niantic for Estuary Transit District riders, including clients of Westbrook's VISTA Vocational and Life Skills Center. The proposal is supported by the Towns of Old Lyme and Lyme. In addition to access to Niantic, this route would link the Estuary Transit District's service area to the areas served by SEAT, including New London, Groton and Norwich, providing additional employment opportunities, as well as, in the reverse direction, allowing greater New London area residents to access shopping opportunities in the malls and outlets in the Estuary Transit District's service area.

ConnDOT encourages both the Estuary District and the Southeast Area Transit District (SEAT) to continue working together to finalize the development of the proposed transit link between Old Saybrook and New London by connecting them in Niantic.

Their proposal to ConnDOT should include, at a minimum, the anticipated requirement for vehicles, additional hours of service, estimated passenger trips and federal, state, and local subsidies necessary to support its operation.

10. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE DEPARTMENT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE LEGISLATURE, PURSUE THE OPTION OF ELECTRONIC TOLLS AND OTHER CONGESTION MITIGATION MEASURES ON CONNECTICUT'S HIGHWAYS. ELECTRONIC TOLLS ARE A PROMISING MEANS TO GENERATE SIGNIFICANT REVENUES WITHOUT INCONVENIENCING HIGHWAY USERS.

Technology currently exists to accomplish this type of revenue collection. Not only do many states currently employ E-Z Pass type electronic fare collection systems, but more developed forms of this technology are in use in several Pacific Rim countries. The revenue collection resulting from the deployment of electronic fare collection is one obvious benefit, but the ability to vary the tolls to discourage highway usage at peak periods and encourage travel during non-peak periods can also provide benefits in terms of reductions in congestion.

ConnDOT continues to monitor changes in federal toll provisions as they apply to the Interstate Highway System. Currently, there remains restrictions on the institution of tolls on interstate highways that are currently toll free.

Toll facilities may be established to fund reconstruction of a highway bridge or tunnel previously constructed with federal-aid highway funds. A toll agreement is required between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the State Department of Transportation and/or toll authority. The toll agreement must require that all toll revenues be first used for debt service; reasonable return on private investment; and operation and maintenance, including reconstructing, resurfacing, and rehabilitating work. The agreement may also include provisions regarding toll revenues in excess of those needed for the required uses as previously described.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) established a pilot program to allow conversion of a free interstate highway to a toll facility in conjunction with needed reconstruction of the interstate highway that could only be possible with the collection of tolls. In December 1998, FHWA solicited candidate projects from states for this pilot program. No candidate projects were submitted.

A Value Pricing Program was also authorized under TEA-21. Initially, this program included up to 15 projects or programs. The purpose of value pricing is to support the efficient use of the highway and support congestion reduction, air quality, energy conservation and transit productivity. It is not intended as a de facto repeal of the federal government's basic prohibition on toll-captive interstate highways. A value pricing project may involve use of pricing (tolls) on interstate highways. Pricing programs are required to consider potential adverse financial effects on low income drivers and, where appropriate, identify measures to mitigate these adverse effects.

Any toll-based scenario, via electronic fares or otherwise, for Connecticut interstate highways, unless carried out under one of the above programs authorized by TEA-21, would probably require Congressional approval to allow tolls despite the general prohibition and repayment of federal funds used to maintain and improve the facility. In addition, the implementation of a toll or value pricing project would require the consideration of political, legal, equity, privacy, environmental, financial, traffic management and safety issues.

11. THE COMMISSION COMMENDS THE DEPARTMENT FOR UNDERTAKING THE RAIL STATION GOVERNANCE STUDY TO ASSESS THE CURRENT CONDITIONS AND NEEDS AT EACH NEW HAVEN LINE AND BRANCH LINE STATION, AND TO DEVELOP STANDARDS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF ALL CONNECTICUT RAILROAD STATIONS. THE DEPARTMENT IS ENCOURAGED TO USE THIS STUDY TO PHASE IN MORE UNIFORMITY IN THE OPERATION OF THE STATIONS AS THE CURRENT LEASES EXPIRE AND ARE RENEWED.

ConnDOT's mission statement for the Connecticut Rail Station Governance Study was: "to develop a Governance Policy and a Financial Policy which improves the current conditions and offers improved quality to our riders." The Department believed that efforts to provide greater uniformity in the administration of New Haven Line and branch line stations, in the physical conditions at the stations, in accounting and financial reporting, in maintenance and, ultimately, in user expectations, would provide a more desirable transit product being offered to the public. To this end, Phase I of the Study, released last January, catalogued the ownership and governance arrangements at all stations on the New Haven Line and the three branch lines; the physical conditions at each station together with the costs to remedy identified deficiencies; the parking capacities, utilization rates and cost structures; and how maintenance, security and other services are provided.

Phase 2 of the Study, released in November, focused on analyzing station governance arrangements used on 8 major commuter rail systems, and then developing three possible governance options for Connecticut. These ranged from minimal efforts to enhance consistency under the existing forms of governance, to a more formal memorandum of understanding format detailing the standards that each local station operator would be required to meet, and lastly, to complete State ownership and operation of the stations.

The Study at this point does not recommend a particular governance structure. It has served to highlight areas where desirable improvements toward consistency can be made, and it will serve as a framework for future policy decisions concerning station governance. ConnDOT is commended for indentifying and addressing this issue, and is encouraged to phase in more uniform operating agreements as leases expire and are renewed.

A draft report (Phase 1 and Phase 2) of the New Haven Line Rail Station Governance Study has been made available for preliminary review and comment by system stakeholders. Public Information meetings will be scheduled (tentatively in March 2005)

to present the study findings to the general public. ConnDOT will then use the information received to develop a plan, in coordination with stakeholders, to address the study findings and improve the overall service for commuters.

12. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTICUT CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION SUPPORT THE NECESSARY FUNDING FOR AMTRAK TO PROCEED WITH THE PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF THE THAMES RIVER AND NIAN TIC RIVER BRIDGES ON THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR.

Amtrak has long identified the Thames River Bridge and the Niantic River Bridge as needing replacement. Failure of either of these moveable bridges would shut down the Northeast Corridor. Both of these bridge replacements are moving forward. The replacement of the moveable span of the Thames River Bridge is scheduled to be advertised in February, with bid opening in March or April 2005. Replacement of the Niantic River Bridge is currently in design, with design work to be completed this spring and advertising being a couple of years off. However, lack of funding for Amtrak's capital budget could further delay these projects. Full funding of Amtrak's budget request of \$1.8 billion would have been one vehicle to advance these two projects. However, Amtrak was ultimately funded at a level of \$1.207 billion for FY 2005.

At this point, it appears that Amtrak is prepared to proceed with the Thames River Bridge replacement project. It is important that Amtrak has the necessary resources to see this project through to completion. In addition, funding will be necessary for replacement of the Niantic River Bridge as it proceeds toward construction in 2007-2008. Though this is beyond the horizon of the current budget, the Commission mentions this project to keep the focus on the Niantic River Bridge project. Replacement of these two old and increasingly problematic bridges is vital to Amtrak and to fishing, pleasure boat and military uses of these affected rivers.

The Commission gratefully acknowledges the strong support of our delegation for Amtrak to date.

ConnDOT supports the recommendation of the Commission that members of the Connecticut Congressional delegation support the necessary funding for Amtrak to proceed with the proposed replacement of the Thames and Niantic River bridges on the Northeast Corridor.

Historically, the State of Connecticut has actively supported full funding for Amtrak operations and infrastructure improvements. In addition to the efforts of the Congressional delegation, in July of 2004 Governor Rell joined 18 other Governors in signing a letter to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees in support of an \$1.8 billion Amtrak appropriation for FY 2005. Unfortunately, the final Amtrak appropriation for FY 2005 fell well short of this amount.

Nevertheless, it is expected that in the future the State of Connecticut will continue to actively support full funding for Amtrak to improve the existing rail infrastructure and inter-city rail passenger operations.

13. THE COMMISSION COMMENDS THE CITY OF NEW HAVEN FOR ITS PROGRESS IN RESTORING CERTAIN DOWNTOWN BUS STOPS TO THEIR PRE-JUNE 28, 1998 LOCATIONS.

In its 1997 Annual Report and Recommendations, the Commission recommended that the City of New Haven work with all affected parties to achieve a satisfactory resolution to proposed changes of bus stops and routes created by a desire of a hotel development for a bus stop free zone on the New Haven Green. The Commission's recommendation was made as a response to public testimony heard at public hearings and at monthly meetings that strongly disapproved of the plan. On June 28, 1998, the bus stop removal plan was implemented.

The Commission continued to hear citizen's complaints at its public hearings and monthly meetings throughout 1998 and 1999. Because of the continued public outcry, the Commission, in its 1999 Annual Report and Recommendations, encouraged the City of New Haven to return the bus stops to their pre-June 28, 1998 locations. Public interest in this issue has continued to the present day.

In June of 2004, the City of New Haven announced that the bus stops would be restored to their prior locations. Within a few months, about two thirds of the restoration was completed, significantly facilitating public bus usage in the New Haven area.

Therefore, the Commission commends the City of New Haven for its restoration actions and offers encouragement to the City to complete the total restoration of the bus stops as early as possible.

