

1. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT CONNDOT PURSUE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE BETWEEN NEW HAVEN, HARTFORD AND SPRINGFIELD TO MEET THE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF COMMUTERS AND OTHER TRAVELERS IN CONNECTICUT'S CENTRAL CORRIDOR WHICH ARE NOT BEING MET BY THE CURRENT AMTRAK SERVICE.

Amtrak currently operates on the Springfield Line between New Haven, Hartford, and Springfield. This service is geared to meeting the needs of intercity travelers making longer trips than daily commuters do, and is priced and scheduled with these longer trips in mind. As such, it is ill-suited for in-state travel needs. Fares between New Haven and Hartford are \$19 one way, while a Hartford to Springfield ride costs \$14. Such a fare structure effectively eliminates most daily commuters from considering this option. The schedule of the Amtrak Springfield Line service is also very limited and poorly suits commuter needs. Amtrak runs 6 trains per day from Hartford to New Haven with the only two morning arrival times being 7:00 AM and 10:15 AM. Only one of the seven daily New Haven to Hartford trains arrives in the morning, with that getting to Hartford at 9:37. Further, with Amtrak under a Congressional mandate to be self-supporting in terms of operating costs, further cuts in Springfield Line service remain a distinct possibility.

The fact that a new rail service in this corridor would be costly to implement in terms of initial capital expenses, and also operating resources, is not lost on the Commission. However, the service would serve multiple needs and does complement other pieces of the state's transportation system. Springfield Line service would tie in to Amtrak's new high speed Acela Northeast Corridor service at New Haven, providing more frequent connections to upstate areas than Amtrak's own limited Springfield Line service does. As the service would connect to Metro-North New Haven Line service and to Shore Line East, it would expand the range of destinations that could be reached by rail from points on those lines, which would in turn result in increases ridership on them as people along the existing services made connections to reach points north of New Haven, and vice versa from points along the Springfield Line to shoreline locations. The construction of the new State Street Station in New Haven will increase access from that city to Hartford and Springfield by providing a convenient, downtown access point. Access to Bradley Field will be enhanced as travelers would have frequent and affordable service into Windsor Locks where a short taxi ride can be made to the airport. Perhaps a rail shuttle from the Windsor Locks station to the airport may also be a future possibility. Also, with the welfare-to-work initiative leading to employment opportunities for many residents who do not own cars, Springfield Line commuter service which would serve intermediate cities such as Meriden, Wallingford, North Haven, Windsor Locks and Enfield in addition to Hartford, New Haven and Springfield, would open up a wealth of employment opportunities for the transit dependent residents of these cities.

The 1991 Statewide Transit System Plan done for ConnDOT estimated a year 2010 daily ridership of 4,300 between Hartford and New Haven without commuter service to Springfield. The 1994 ConnDOT study *Feasibility Evaluation of Commuter Rail Service Along the New Haven - Hartford Corridor* projected ridership at 2000 trips daily, again with service not extending past Hartford. The efficiency of serving these trips is increased by the fact that the trip demand in this corridor is bi-directional, i.e., not predominantly just northbound or southbound. Therefore, unlike Shore Line East for example, there is no

‘deadhead’ direction. Each movement will be a revenue trip.

It is also very possible that Springfield Line commuter service could be provided through a joint Amtrak/ ConnDOT venture. With a joint, shared service, passengers utilizing the line for commutation to work could use multiple ride tickets, either weekly or monthly, that would be priced substantially below the one-way Amtrak fare for the same trip. The single fare ticket would continue to be used by single trip passengers, but daily commuter usage would be encouraged by the lower fare per trip. If a jointly operated service were established, increased frequency during the commuting hours of the day would be necessary compared to the existing schedule. These extra trains would not only serve commuters but would also be an advantage to Amtrak since they would provide additional connections to Amtrak trains operating on the Boston to Washington Northeast Corridor route. If added service required the addition of more passing sidings to handle the additional train traffic, it would be expected that these new sidings would be paid for jointly by Amtrak and the State.

The Commission urges the General Assembly to consider funding for Springfield Line commuter service. ConnDOT does not currently have the budgetary resources to incorporate a major new service without significant service cuts elsewhere in the system. Necessary capital and operating costs may take several years to get in place, so it is important to begin the process now.