



Dannel P. Malloy

GOVERNOR
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

April 4, 2011

The Honorable Frank N. Nicasastro, Sr.
Legislative Office Building, Room 4035
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Tim O'Brien
Legislative Office Building, Room 4024
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Representatives O'Brien and Nicasastro:

Thank you for your leadership and advocacy on the question of proceeding with the proposed New Britain-Hartford Bus Rapid Transit project. It is clear that both the bus rapid transit advocates and the commuter rail advocates are eager for the people of Connecticut to have access to enhanced transit options and alternatives to the status quo. I am as well. Last week's spirited discussion was very helpful in this decision-making process, and I am grateful to all for their participation.

Our discussion placed two options on the table: (1) the New Britain-Hartford Bus Rapid Transit project and (2) the revitalization of the rail line from Bristol/Waterbury to Hartford. Each proposal occupies a different place in the process. The New Britain-Hartford Busway is "ready to go" with 80% federal funding and a commitment from the Federal Transit Administration to sign a Full Funding Grant Agreement. The proposed revitalization of the commuter rail line is in the early stages of study and planning. Although some viewed the two options as mutually exclusive, I do not. As a result, my decision in this matter is to aggressively pursue construction of the New Britain-Hartford Bus Rapid Transit project while launching a parallel and equally aggressive initiative to study and plan for the Bristol/Waterbury commuter rail line.¹

It is clear that Connecticut can no longer afford the status quo on any front, including our current transportation system. We are now working towards a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system that will not only move people and goods more efficiently, but more critically, foster economic growth and an improved quality of life for Connecticut residents. To compete regionally and globally, Connecticut must be multi-modal. No single mode of transportation will speed Connecticut into the

¹ The proposed Bristol/Waterbury commuter rail line would link into the Hartford-New Haven line in Berlin under this plan. This would only increase travel time by 3 minutes from the original Waterbury/Bristol alternative proposal.

future. To strengthen Connecticut's economic competitiveness, we must find the right mix of road, rail, transit, air, bicycle and pedestrian travel to catalyze responsible commercial growth and job creation.

Each project under discussion offers a different opportunity to the residents of Central Connecticut – one is rapid transit, and the other commuter rail. Together, the two projects plus the development of high-speed inter-city passenger rail in the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield corridor produce even greater synergies.

First, the “ready to go” New Britain-Hartford Bus Rapid Transit project addresses the unique characteristics and needs of this particular congested corridor. It will connect New Britain, including the East Campus of Central Connecticut State University, with downtown Hartford in half the time it takes now to travel by a regular public bus. The proposed busway will usher in a new era in transit for a projected 16,000 riders by utilizing new technology for fare payment and real-time transit communication, while providing a flexible mode of transport that can respond to increased demand quickly and economically.

At a time of great economic need, the New Britain-Hartford Bus Rapid Transit Project will create 4,000 short-term construction jobs, beginning this summer; and, hundreds of permanent jobs upon completion. In the long-term, the New Britain-Hartford Bus Rapid Transit Project project will increase regional mobility and synergies across transportation systems, and increase travel speeds by 10% in the heavily congested New Britain-Hartford I-84 corridor. Furthermore, in the future, when the time comes to replace the I-84 Hartford Viaduct, bus rapid transit will provide major relief to the highway disruption.

In addition, the busway construction provides transit oriented development and economic growth opportunities around the 11 transit stops. Interested developers and landowners have already invested time and money into revitalizing the areas along this corridor, and are eager to move forward. Rapid Transit, most notably in Pittsburgh and Cleveland, has sparked development and growth while moving people more efficiently. This project will act as an economic multiplier to this region. Furthermore, at the February Bond Commission meeting, \$5 million was made available for transit oriented development projects statewide, including TOD along the busway.

Finally, there is the question of project financing. Recently, much of the debate has centered on the possibility of re-allocating federal funds for the proposed rail alternative. There are many merits to both projects, but only the Bus Rapid Transit Project has federal funding in place.

According to the Federal Transit Administration's letter to me of March 20, 2011, “[a] decision to withdraw this [New Britain-Hartford Bus Rapid Transit] project for consideration and seek FTA funding for an alternative rail project in the region would require Connecticut to reenter the competitive New Starts process at the beginning. In effect, the state would be starting from scratch, which would require new planning, design, and engineering work to be completed on the alternative project.” Even if the State completed all the necessary requirements, there is no guarantee that the \$275 million Connecticut would forgo now in New Starts funds, would be available to the State in the future. While Mayor of Stamford, I had experience with the New Starts program in connection with the Stamford Urban Transitway. I am well aware of the potential for delay in such a rigorous program. Receiving New Starts funding is a great achievement and represents hours of hard work.

Connecticut has a track record of leaving federal funds on the table. I am unwilling to run the risk of losing still additional federal funds. It is time to break with a history. I have communicated with the Federal Transit Administration and ConnDOT that Connecticut will accept the \$275 million in New Starts funding in the President's proposed FY 2011 and FY 2012 budgets, and put Connecticut residents to work this summer constructing the New Britain- Hartford Bus Rapid Transit Project. The remaining required Connecticut portion of the Busway funding of \$89 million will be included on the April Bond Commission Agenda. The timing is right to undertake this project. Taxpayers can "get more transit for less money" given the advantageous bidding environment in the current economic climate noted the FTA. It may not be a perfect project, but it is the first step in creating a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system in Central Connecticut.

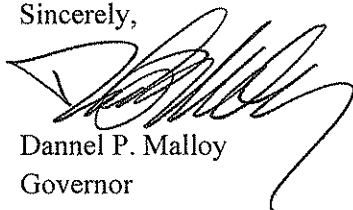
Moving ahead with the Hartford-New Britain Bus Rapid Transit Project does not preclude the development of a commuter rail option from Waterbury to Hartford.

The rail advocates put forward a very worthy and compelling case for revitalizing the Bristol/Waterbury rail line. Rail coalition members effectively noted the importance of linking one of the region's largest employers with easier access to New York City as well as the need to understand changing commuter patterns in a larger Central Connecticut region as the State faces new economic realities.

No recent comprehensive study on this rail line exists. If Connecticut is to proceed with this proposal and seek federal funds, the first step is to thoroughly study this whole corridor, assess the commuter rail needs, and review alternatives. I have directed a study of the Central Connecticut Rail Alternative to be included on the April Bond Commission Agenda for \$1 million. It would be another piece in Connecticut's pursuit of comprehensive transportation system and improved economic vitality.

Again, thank you for your leadership and partnership. I look forward to continuing to work with both of you, and all transit advocates to advance a comprehensive transportation system that positions Connecticut for a healthy and prosperous future.

Sincerely,



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

cc:

The Honorable Joseph Lieberman
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
The Honorable John Larson
The Honorable Joe Courtney
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
The Honorable Jim Himes
The Honorable Chris Murphy

The Honorable Pedro Segarra, Mayor, City of Hartford
The Honorable Scott Slifka, Mayor, West Hartford
The Honorable Mike Lenares, Mayor, Newington
The Honorable Timothy T. Stewart, Mayor, New Britain
The Honorable Donald Williams, President Pro Tempore
The Honorable Christopher G. Donovan, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Martin Looney, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Brendan Sharkey, House Majority Leader
The Honorable John McKinney, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Lawrence F. Cafero, Jr., House Minority Leader
The Honorable Andrew Maynard, Deputy Majority Leader
The Honorable Antonio Guerrero
The Honorable Toni Boucher
The Honorable David Scribner
The Honorable Eric Coleman
The Honorable John Fonfara
The Honorable Paul Doyle
The Honorable Beth Bye
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The Honorable Minnie Gonzalez
The Honorable Marie Kirkley-Bey
The Honorable Douglas McCrory
The Honorable Matt Ritter
The Honorable Hector Robles
The Honorable Kelvin Roldan
The Honorable Brian Becker
The Honorable Andrew Fleischmann
The Honorable Joseph Verrengia
The Honorable Sandy Nafis
The Honorable Peter Tercyak
The Honorable Betty Boukus
The Honorable Robert Sanchez
Peter M. Rogoff, Administrator, Federal Transit Administration
James Redeker, Acting Commissioner, CT Dept of Transportation
Benjamin Barnes, Secretary, Office of Policy and Management
Lyle Wray, Executive Director, CRCOG
Michael Nicastro, President and C.E.O., Bristol Chamber of Commerce
Oz Griebel, Chairman, MetroHartford Alliance