Proposed Bill 800
An Act Restoring Commuter Rail Service from Waterbury to Hartford

Testimony by:

Mary Glassman  
Policy Board Chair,  
Capitol Region Council of Governments  
Hartford, CT  
First Selectman  
Simsbury, CT

The Capitol Region Council of Governments opposes proposed bill 800, which calls for removing funding from the New Britain Hartford Busway project for the purpose of restoring commuter rail service from Waterbury to Hartford.

While state funding will cover 20% of the cost of the Busway project, the remaining 80% will be funded by the federal government, and the majority of this funding will come from the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA’s) New Starts program. New Starts funding cannot be moved from one project to another at the will of a state or locality. The New Britain Hartford Busway has been through a long and arduous planning process, and at each step it has had to pass muster with the FTA, particularly on measures of cost effectiveness. If the Busway is taken off the table, the federal New Starts funds will not come to our region, but will go to another project in the country that has completed the New Starts process. The proposal for a Waterbury to Hartford rail line has not even begun this planning process. Further, construction of the Busway will not preclude a rail link between the Waterbury line and the New Haven Hartford Springfield line in the future.

The Capitol Region Council of Governments supports a balanced transportation system which provides a variety of ways for people to get around – motor vehicle, transit, bicycle, and on foot. We want to encourage more individuals to use transit, and the way to do that is to provide a high quality transit product that will attract riders out of their cars. The busway is just that.

In 2001 CRCOG adopted a Regional Transit Strategy which recommends the development of several transit improvements including the New Britain Hartford Busway, the New Haven/Hartford/Springfield commuter rail, bus rapid transit improvements in other corridors, and improvements to the basic bus on street system. All these investments work together to create a seamless system that meets the needs of our regions residents and businesses.

The Busway, the first element of our integrated transit plan to proceed to final design, will bring rapid transit to the region. It is a 9.4 mile long traffic free travel way with 11 stations providing frequent and reliable service; off vehicle fare payment and level
platform loading will keep boarding time to a minimum. Busway stations will provide opportunities for transit oriented development. The Busway will carry 16,000 daily riders, approximately 1/3 of whom will be new to transit.

The Busway will not only improve transit service, it was identified in a study completed in 1999 as the most cost effective solution to congestion in the Interstate 84 corridor west of Hartford. More than 50% of all freeway delay in the region takes place on this section of highway. The busway was deemed to be the best solution to the congestion, better than expanding the highway, better than adding HOV lanes, and better than a variety of other transit alternatives. The busway project has withstood the rigorous evaluation process of the Federal Transit Administration and is just months away from securing a full federal funding agreement.

As the busway is proceeding to implementation, the New Haven/Hartford/Springfield commuter and high speed rail project is also moving forward. The Busway and rail projects are complementary, and it is important to recognize that neither can replace the other. The busway will have much more frequent service (every 3 to 6 minutes in the peak) as opposed to the half hourly (in the peak) service on the rail line. In addition, Busway stations will be closer together (every 0.5 to 1 mile) as opposed to the rail line where stations will be spaced 2 or more miles apart. The busway is designed to serve short to medium distance trips. The New Haven Hartford Springfield rail service, and a Waterbury Hartford rail service, for that matter, would serve longer distance intercity trips.

The Capitol Region supports all modes of transit, in the proper location: rail in the New Haven Hartford Springfield corridor, bus rapid transit in our most dense corridors, and bus on street and dial a ride throughout the region. The process for securing federal funding for a transit project is difficult and the Busway is almost to the finish line. Stopping it now will mean going back to the drawing board and it is very likely that we will not see true improvements to our transit system for another generation.

We request that you oppose Bill 800.
New Britain Hartford Busway Fact Sheet

Why a Busway from Hartford to New Britain?

- The busway will relieve congestion on the Interstate 84 corridor west of downtown Hartford. This corridor is the most congested in the capital region and more than 50% of the region’s freeway delay occurs on this segment of highway.
- Frequent, rapid transit: In the peak periods buses will come by stations every 3 to 6 minutes. For bus stops off the busway with continuing service on the busway, buses will come by at least every 15 minutes.
- The busway is expected to generate 4,700 to 6,100 person year jobs.
- The proposed busway will entice drivers to leave their cars at home and use transit aiding freeway congestion and reducing greenhouse gases.
- The busway is a more cost effective solution to congestion than widening the freeway.
- The busway will be funded with 80% federal funds, 20% state funds.

What is the New Britain Hartford Busway?

- The busway is a rapid transit facility: a bus only roadway which will provide frequent and reliable transit service all day long.
- Because the busway is for buses only and buses will not be delayed by other traffic, service is reliable all day long.
- The busway is expected to serve 16,000 daily trips, 5,000 of which are trips that formerly were made by car.
- The busway will have 11 stations along its 9.4 mile length. Stations will have level boarding platforms and off vehicle fare payment.
- A busway can affect land use development patterns and has been proven to be a catalyst for transit oriented development. (Pittsburgh, Ottawa, Brisbane and many other cities) In fact, in Cleveland, the Healthline has resulted in a doubling of property values adjacent to the busway and has stimulated over $4 billion of investment.
- The busway will be located in an abandoned rail corridor from New Britain to Newington Junction. From Newington Junction to Union Station in downtown Hartford, it will operate in the Amtrak corridor (part of the New Haven Hartford Springfield corridor).
- Because buses will be able to enter the busway at several locations, the busway permits very flexible service. Buses can leave the busway to provide passenger pick ups and drop offs in lower density areas. A busway can deliver passengers from their origin to their destination without the need to transfer to another vehicle or route. The benefits of the busway will extend to many communities and destinations: Waterbury, Bristol, Southington, Cheshire, Central CT State University, West Farms Mall, UConn Health Center, West Hartford Center, St. Francis Hospital, and Hartford Hospital.
- Busways are ideal rapid transit systems for locations like Hartford where densities are too low to warrant an investment in light rail (light rail requires a density of at least 9 dwelling units per acre for the entire corridor). The busway can “gather in” density.
- The busway project includes a 4.5 mile bike path to be built parallel to the busway from New Britain to Newington Junction.
- Busway station design has paid careful attention to the need for pedestrian and bicycle access to the stations.
New Britain Hartford Busway Fact Sheet

Busway Cost and Funding:

- According to the latest cost estimates, the busway project will be $567 million. This covers the cost to construct the busway, the bike path, and the stations, the cost to purchase the buses and the needed right of way, the cost to reconstruct bridges and overpasses, and a contingency set aside.
- The state is very close to getting approval from the FTA for a full funding grant agreement, which will provide for funding of 80% of the project by the federal government.
- The busway will be funded with 80% federal funds, 20% state funds. This equates to $454 million coming from the federal government for the project. $275 million of the federal funds are funds that are only available for this project. The remaining federal funds have been set aside for the project out of annual federal appropriations ($85 million from transit appropriations, $93.6 million from highway funding sources). The state funding ($113 million) has already been committed to the project in prior years’ budgets and the current state transit capital plan.

Background – How the Project was Developed:

- Planning for the project began in the Hartford West Major Investment Study (MIS) which evaluated alternatives for relieving congestion on Interstate 84 west of Hartford (March 1999). This corridor is the most congested in the capitol region. In fact, more than 50% of the region’s traffic delay occurs on this segment of highway.
- The Hartford West MIS identified the busway as the most cost effective way to reduce congestion. The final plan also included recommendations for some small highway improvements, which have been making their way forward to construction.
  The Hartford West MIS examined several alternative transit proposals, including light rail, commuter rail, and busway, in several alignments. It also evaluated high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. The New Britain Hartford Busway was the most effective (attracted more riders) transit alternative tested.
- The ridership projections were made with a computer model that is approved by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for projecting transit ridership. The ridership estimates have been exhaustively reviewed by the FTA on an annual basis.
- Upon completion of the MIS in 1999, the Capitol Region Council of Governments and the Central CT Regional Planning Agency designated the busway as the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the corridor. This was the first step in moving the project forward for federal transit funding.
- Since 1999, the project has been moving forward through the FTA process for new starts funding. This included completion of an Environmental Impact Study and development of design documents. Each year the DOT has submitted a New Starts application to the FTA which has enabled the project to move forward in the funding process.
- The Capitol Region Council of Governments used Transportation Strategy Board funding to help busway corridor towns to develop plans for transit oriented development at station sites.

Construction Schedule:

- Construction is expected to begin in early 2011, with the busway fully operational in 2014.
Transit Improvements for the Hartford Region

Status of Plans
February 2011

Presented by
CAPITOL REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Why We Are Here

- Transit project update
- Project rationale
- The system
2 Major Transit Projects

- New Britain Hartford Busway
- New Haven/Hartford/Springfield Passenger Rail
Ongoing transit improvements

- Articulated buses
Ongoing transit improvements

- Clean fuel buses
  - Clean diesel
  - Hybrid electric
  - Fuel cell
Three Types of Transit

- **Street Transit**
  - Bus on street
  - Streetcar

- **Medium Capacity Rapid Transit**
  - Light rail
  - Busway

- **High Capacity Rapid Transit**
  - Metro (subway, elevated train)
  - Regional rail (commuter rail)
Street Transit

- Provides local access
- Speed dependent upon traffic conditions
- Frequent stops
- Simplest to implement
- Can serve all size and density communities
Rapid Transit: Bus Rapid Transit or Busway

- Removes bus from traffic
- Serves short to medium distance trips
- Stations approx $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 mile apart
- Direct bus routings to local streets and downtown
- Serves medium density central business district and low to medium density outlying areas
Rapid Transit: Light Rail Transit

- Removes vehicle from traffic
- Serves short to medium distance trips
- Stations approx $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 mile apart
- Pedestrian and transit connections essential for local distribution
- Serves medium to high density areas throughout the entire route
Rapid Transit: Regional/Commuter Rail

- Operates longer distances
- Widely spaced stations (2 to 5 miles) with large parking facilities
- Serves low density outlying areas
- Serves central business district with high density (NYC, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston)
Project Overview
Project Overview

- **Busway**
  - Serves short and medium length trips
  - Largely focused upon travel to downtown Hartford
  - Characterized by very frequent (close to 5 minutes during the peak) service

- **Commuter Rail**
  - Serves long distance trips
  - Links the region to the NYC metro area
  - Infrequent service (every $\frac{1}{2}$ hour at best)
This is not a bus.

It's a place to stream movies on your laptop.

Super fast mobile internet
clear.com

888-803-CLEAR
clear.com
Busway – Origin of Proposal

- Congestion Study – I-84 West

Total Daily Delay
vehicle hours
all corridors = 2,225

- I-84 West: 1,183 (53%)
- I-91 North: 711 (32%)
- I-84 East: 195
- I-91 South: 108
- Route 2: 28

I-84 West I-91 North I-84 East I-91 South Route 2

Total Daily Delay
vehicle hours
all corridors = 2,225
Many options considered:

- More freeway lanes
- Other roadway improvements
- Transit improvements –
  - various alignments
  - bus, light rail, regional rail

Busway proved most cost effective
Busway Design

- Built in rail corridor
- Bus only roadway
- 9.4 miles long
- 11 stations
- Bike path
Busway Service

- **Shuttle from New Britain to Hartford**
  - Stops at all stations
  - Runs every 5 to 10 minutes in peak
  - Runs all day long (4:30 AM to 1:30 AM)

- **Regular express service from Cheshire, Waterbury and Bristol (12 min. NB to Htfd.)**

- **Connections to UConn Health Center, West Farms Mall**

- **Other services linking the busway to major traffic generators**
  - St. Francis and Hartford Hospitals
  - State office buildings
Busway: Real Rapid Transit

- Real time information
- Level platforms
Busway: Real Rapid Transit

- Off vehicle fare collection

- Reliable: no traffic backups, or traffic incidents
New Britain Hartford Busway

- Expected ridership
  - 16,000 daily
  - 5,000 daily trips formerly made by car

- Estimated cost
  - $567 million capital
  - 80% paid by federal government
Busway Schedule

- Final Funding Agreement from FTA: soon
- Construction schedule
  - Commence Spring 2011
- Operations begin – 2014
Busway: Additional Benefits

- Transformative

- Proven to generate Transit Oriented Development
  - Pittsburgh, Ottawa, Cleveland, Brisbane
This project includes 2 proposals:

- Commuter rail
- High speed, intercity rail
New Haven Hartford Springfield Commuter Rail

- Recommended by CRCOG’s 2001 Regional Transit Strategy
- Feasibility work completed by CTDOT
- Will be similar to service on Metro North Branch Lines
- Will provide a link to Bradley International Airport
- Primary trips served: longer distance
Regional Vision as evolving in CT, MA, VT
COORDINATED SYSTEM

1. NYC – NH – SPR – Boston
   - “Inland Route”
   - alternate to NEC coastal route

2. SPR – VT – Montreal
   - Knowledge Corridor
   - “Montrealer Route”
Broad goals of New England Rail Vision

- Expand rail to support:
  - economic growth
  - livable communities
- Promote energy efficiency
- Reduce automobile, truck, & air congestion
- Improve mobility & connectivity
Proposed service improvements

Intercity stations

- Springfield, Windsor Locks (BDL), Hartford, Meriden, New Haven
- All day service: peak & off-peak
- Peak Service
  - intercity trains (every 60-minutes)
    o thru-routed to NYC
  - commuter trains (every 30 minutes)
    o connection in New Haven

Offers redevelopment opportunities at each station
Proposed service improvements

Commuter stations

- Enfield (new)
- Windsor
- West Hartford (new)
- Newington (new)
- Berlin
- Wallingford
- North Haven (new)

- All day service: peak & off-peak
- **30-minute frequency** in peak
  - commuter trains
  - connection in New Haven
Complementary Improvements = A Transit System

- Busway and train are side by side in part of the corridor
- Busway will provide local distribution for longer distance train trips
- Connections at Newington, West Hartford and Hartford
The system

Sample trips accommodated by the busway and commuter rail

- Commute to Hartford from New Britain via busway
- Travel to NYC from Bristol via busway and commuter rail
- Commute to class at CCSU from Hartford via busway
- Travel to airport via commuter rail/airport link
Questions, discussion

- Let us know your concerns, questions

- You can contact us at:
  Sandy Fry
  sfry@crcog.org
  860-522-2217 x220