

3. THE COMMISSION NOTES THE CONTINUED ENHANCEMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF NEW EMPLOYEES ENTERING THE WORK FORCE AND APPLAUDS THE COLLABORATE EFFORTS TAKEN IN THE VARIOUS REGIONS OF THE STATE TO IDENTIFY EMPLOYMENT SITES NEEDING TRANSIT ACCESS, EMPLOYEES NEEDING TRANSIT SERVICES, AND THE MOST EXPEDITIOUS WAY TO MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO. FUNDING FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES INCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES, THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION AND EVEN PRIVATE EMPLOYERS, SUPPLEMENTING EXISTING OPERATING FUNDING FROM CONNDOT AND OTHER OPERATORS IS BEING MANAGED IN A COORDINATED FASHION TO PROVIDE THE GREATEST LEVEL OF SERVICE THAT THE EXISTING FUNDING, FROM THESE MULTIPLE SOURCES, CAN SUPPORT.

THE COMMISSION RECOGNIZES THE ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL NATURE OF TRANSPORTATION IN SECURING AND MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT, PARTICULARLY FOR THOSE ENTERING THE WORK FORCE FOR THE FIRST TIME. AS WE CLOSE 1999, ADEQUATE FUNDING APPEARS TO BE IN PLACE TO SUSTAIN JOBS ACCESS TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS IN MOST OF THE STATE THROUGH MID-2001. HOWEVER, WE URGE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO TAKE CONTINUED NOTE OF THE DIRECT LINKAGE BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS) FUNDING SAVINGS AS PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT, AND THE ADEQUATE FUNDING OF THE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THE EMPLOYMENT OF LOW INCOME AND TRANSIT DEPENDENT WORKERS.

Funding from a \$2.95 million Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant announced in June 1999 for jobs access transportation enhancements, along with the continued availability of Transitional Employment Independence Program funding from DSS, has provided the means for many new and expanded transit services to successfully match new workers coming off public assistance with the jobs they are seeking.

In southwestern Connecticut, ridership on services funded by the DSS and FTA grants has reached over 28,000 trips per month by October 1999, and is still increasing. One example of such services is the new 'seamless' bus service between Milford and Norwalk on the Boston Post Road. This service, known as the Coastal Link, is run cooperatively by the Milford, Greater Bridgeport and Norwalk Transit Districts, and allows riders to make trips anywhere along this corridor without transferring from one bus to another. Begun only on October 31, the new seamless service was already attracting 1,200 trips per day by November 19. Another example of a jobs access transit enhancement in this region is the Bridgeport/Valley Connection, which extends Greater Bridgeport Transit District's Route #15 service to Derby, allowing connections to the Valley Transit District. Ridership on this route has now reached 8,000 trips per month, which is a 41% increase over the levels of October 1998. Evening shuttle services have been added on two routes in Norwalk to provide job access after normal bus service hours cease. Another FTA-funded enhancement which began October 31 extends access up Route 111 to Trumbull and Monroe to serve such employment sites as Oxford Health and Scholastic Book.

In the Hartford area, Connecticut Transit has added more weekend service and more late evening runs between 9 PM and midnight to serve second shift retail and other jobs. New Berlin Turnpike and Bradley Field 'Flyer' routes have been added, with the latter recently extended to serve Enfield. Service along the Simsbury Commuter Express route has been enhanced with an additional morning run and one in the evening to connect downtown Hartford to Imperial Nurseries. In addition, on December 12 Connecticut Transit began a new service from Hartford to the Fox Hill Employee Commuter Lot where connections can be made to the Foxwoods shuttle system. This route also accesses the Norwich Intermodal Center. In the Hartford area, the Greater Hartford Ridesharing Corporation and the Greater Hartford Transit District are co-participants in the Access to Jobs program. The Greater Hartford Ridesharing Corporation furnishes vans and organizes vanpools to job sites, while the Greater Hartford Transit District provides trips to more isolated or remote sites where insufficient numbers of workers preclude the organization of vanpools or the extension of Connecticut Transit routes. The sum total of all these efforts is that daily Access to Jobs trips exceeded 2000 in the Capitol Region in October 1999, far exceeding the original program goal of 1400 daily trips.

These types of service enhancements are occurring throughout Connecticut. Eastern Connecticut, by virtue of not being included in FTA's job access grant, is more limited than the remainder of the state in the resources available to it. The Commission has heard at its public hearings of the new transit services being implemented in the Waterbury and Torrington areas to promote access to jobs. These services statewide are supporting a whole new way of life for thousands of our residents and their families. The Commission urges that the role of transportation in supporting this change continue to be recognized by the Administration and the General Assembly as State budgets are drawn up and approved.

Finally, the Commission asks for action in implementing an agreement reached between the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and The Work Place, Inc., the jobs access transportation coordinating agency for southwestern Connecticut. The agreement, reached a year and a half ago, provides \$300,000 in funding to subsidize employment-related transportation to Bridgeport resident TANF* clients to use in commuting to jobs in the Southwest Corridor from Bridgeport to Greenwich. The transit voucher program would provide multi-modal trip fare vouchers to enable Bridgeport residents coming off the TANF program to reach employment sites in the job-tight Southwest Corridor. Since the agreement for the \$300,000 in funding was reached between then DECD Commissioner Peter Ellef and The Work Place, responsibility for this program was transferred from DECD to the Department of Labor. The funds, however, have still not been made available. We urge that the availability of these funds be expedited by the Department of Labor.

* Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a Department of Social Services program