

1998 LONG-RANGE CHAPTER ONE

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I. MAJOR ISSUES & CONCERNS

The vision for Connecticut's transportation system is one of optimism. But the Department must be persistent in reminding people about the importance of transportation to the quality of life in the state and nation. If the condition of the transportation system is allowed to deteriorate, the consequences could be serious with regard to safety, the economy and the environment. This chapter identifies some of the major mobility, accessibility, environmental and transportation programming issues and challenges facing the State. It also discusses ConnDOT's approaches to addressing them.

A. MOBILITY

1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION AND CONNDOT'S INITIATIVES

Providing the level of mobility required to move people and goods in a safe and efficient manner is becoming increasingly challenging. As the twenty-first century approaches, Connecticut's existing transportation system is in good physical condition. However, the demands on the transportation system continue to increase and congestion, especially on the highway system, is a continuing concern. Improvements to expand the system are difficult to implement because of the high cost, insufficient funds, environmental impacts and general public opposition to highway expansion. It is unlikely that implementation of major highway capacity improvements will become any easier in the future. Therefore, the Department's primary goals must be to continue to maintain the existing transportation system in a good condition and to increase the efficiency and safety of the existing system. An adequate level of funding is necessary to attain these goals. Additionally, it will become increasingly important to address mobility needs of individuals and businesses in Connecticut through greater coordination of land use and transportation planning.

Various initiatives, such as incident management, intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and computerized traffic signal systems are being implemented to increase the efficiency of the existing highway system. ITS is a relatively new concept with the potential to revolutionize the means of increasing efficiency. It encompasses a number of systems including traffic management, traveler information, transit management, emergency and incident management, and electronic payment of fares. ITS utilizes the latest technologies, such as Global Positioning System (GPS), and will likely result in the development and refinement of new technologies. Continued advancement and expansion of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) are critical components of the Department's plan to enable the highway and transit system meet future transportation needs and mobility requirements. On the transit side, the Department is participating in the electrification of the Northeast Rail Corridor so that AMTRAK can provide high speed rail service between Boston and Washington. Also, improvement has been made in loading and unloading rail passengers by raising and lengthening rail platforms. This increases safety for passengers and reduces dwell time for trains. With respect to the bus system, the Department is conducting two distinct bus transit studies. These studies consist of: a Comprehensive Local Bus System Study and a Bus Transit Management, Governance and Finance Study. The Comprehensive

Local Bus System Study will evaluate the operations, performance, productivity and efficiency of the State's urban and rural bus systems, as well as express bus routes, including all services required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in each system. The Bus Transit Management, Governance and Finance Study will evaluate the administrative and management structures of the state-subsidized urban and rural bus systems, including complementary ADA paratransit. At Bradley International Airport, studies are underway to develop a plan for replacing the existing terminal to accommodate the increasing air travel demand and improve control of aircraft operations. The State Pier reconstruction in New London was completed in the summer of 1997 and construction of another warehouse at the pier is planned. Also, a transportation and land use compatibility study of the Pier and its environs was completed in October 1997.

The effort to encourage commuters to use rideshare and transit options must continue, since increases in the efficiency of operations on the transportation system cannot be expected to completely eliminate congestion. Except during the oil embargo periods, when there were long lines at the fuel pumps and high fuel costs, it has been very difficult to reduce single occupant vehicle usage. Ridesharing, nevertheless, contributes in reducing congestion and conserving energy, has substantial user benefits; and is the easiest, least expensive way to reduce congestion.

Intermodalism, a multi-modal concept that promotes the efficient movement of people and freight on land, air and water, will become an increasingly important means of efficiently and cost-effectively meeting the mobility needs of individuals and businesses in Connecticut and in other states. Technological advances, changes in the production and shipping of goods, the need for businesses to reduce costs to be competitive in a global economy, deregulation of the transportation industries, and federal support are some of the key reasons why. For example, containerization has improved the efficient movement of freight dramatically. The transfer of containerized goods from ship to rail can be done much faster than had previously been possible. This improves just-in-time delivery, which reduces the need for large warehouses. The net result is reduced transportation costs. At the federal level, the strong support for intermodalism that was reflected in the provisions of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 also is reflected in the provisions of the new transportation reauthorization legislation, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. The Department has developed an Intermodal Management System (IMS). The IMS will be used to better plan and operate an effective transport system that considers the relationship of the various modes to each other and allows for the effective multi-modal movement of people and goods.

In summary, the Department will continue improving the process wherein it can work effectively and in cooperation with the regional planning organizations and its citizens to maintain and improve a balanced transportation system. The Department has the responsibility to articulate the need for a level of funding that is adequate to implement a program of improvements that is necessary to provide the mobility required by its citizens and businesses. As part of its effort to maintain and improve the existing transportation system, it will become increasingly important for the state to better coordinate land use and transportation planning to meet the mobility and accessibility needs of individuals and businesses in Connecticut. The Department intends to keep informed about issues related to transportation and vigorously act to deter those that are detrimental and pursue those that are beneficial to its ability to carry out its mission. It is

extremely important to the citizens of Connecticut that all of the various transportation elements be actively pursued, so that Connecticut's transportation system enhances the general quality of life; promotes economic development; increases productivity; and moves people and goods in a safe, efficient manner.

2. EFFECTS OF TRANSPORTATION ON THE ECONOMY

Transportation shapes our communities and touches most aspects of our lives. Because transportation effects are so pervasive, transportation systems should be designed and operated to produce benefits across the broadest set of societal values. The importance that transportation systems have on our economy can not be overstated.

Good transportation facilities are a key factor in maintaining and promoting the economic health and stability within the nation, the region and the state because they provide access to resources, goods and markets. In any form of economic activity, accessibility is a critical need. Hence, transportation plays an important role in maintaining an environment that allows industries to remain competitive. In Connecticut, as in other states, it is imperative that existing companies maintain a strong competitive position so they can compete globally. It is also important that the State of Connecticut provide an environment that can attract new companies and keep existing companies from relocating.

If the State of Connecticut is successful in its efforts to get businesses to expand, relocate, or develop in Connecticut, the State and the region may realize significant economic gains. The October 1994 report, "THE SWISS BANK AGREEMENT IMPACT ON NET TAX RECEIPTS AND THE CONNECTICUT ECONOMY," produced by the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis of the University of Connecticut, outlines the economic impact of the Swiss Bank headquarters' relocation from New York City to Stamford, Connecticut near the Stamford Transportation Center and, hence, provides insights into the impact that just one major corporation can have on state and regional economies. The projected economic impact of Swiss Bank on the Connecticut economy is as follows.

Economic Impact of Swiss Bank on Connecticut in 2012:

- Approximately 8,000 new jobs
- Approximately 7,500 new jobs in the private sector and \$1.2 billion in wages and salaries
- \$785 million *increase* in disposable income (unadjusted for inflation)
- \$26 *increase* in per capita (each man, woman and child in Connecticut) in real disposable income
- \$628 million *increase* in real Gross State Product (1994 inflation adjusted \$)
- Population increase of approximately 7,300 persons

Revenue* Impact of Swiss Bank on Connecticut, 1995-2012:

*Assuming 68.5% of the Swiss Bank corporate profits are taxable in Connecticut

- \$825 million in new tax receipts over 18 years (average of \$45.8 million per year)

- Increase in state tax receipts from all sources by \$710-744 million total over 18 years

A number of other major developments have been implemented, or are being considered for implementation in the state. These include the casinos in Ledyard and Montville, the expansion of the Mystic Aquarium and Mystic Seaport, ballparks in Bridgeport, Norwich and New Britain, the expansion of the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, and the possible construction of “Adriaen’s Landing,” (a proposal to construct a conference center, stadium, etc.) in Hartford. Each of these developments is located near expressways and/or rail lines. One of the ingredients required for their success is a well-maintained transportation system that provides adequate access.

To remain competitive; to improve the State’s ability to compete economically in regional, national and global markets, and to realize the economic gains from attracting companies such as Swiss Bank, the State of Connecticut must make transportation policies and investments that lead to increased productivity, growth and improved living standards. It must allocate the resources required to maintain and modify its transportation infrastructure in response to current and future transportation needs that result from demographic trends; technological innovations; state, national and foreign policies and regulations; and unforeseen situations and events.

3. MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE CONNECTICUT’S HIGHWAY SYSTEM AS A VITAL COMPONENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GOODS MOVEMENT SYSTEMS

A significant portion of commercial freight is moved on the highways. Trucks transport nearly 75 percent of the value, one half of the weight, and nearly 25 percent of the ton-miles of all freight shipments in the U.S. and its territories. The number of commercial trucks on America’s highways grew by 76 percent between 1982 and 1992, while the number of vehicle-miles traveled doubled. To be competitive in the global economy, U.S. producers must maximize the efficiency of production and distribution. For example, just-in-time delivery systems have greatly reduced overhead costs and “hub and spoke” distribution systems have increased efficiency. As manufacturers rely more extensively on improved logistics to increase economic efficiency, demands on highway capacity and reliability increase. The advent of new information-processing technologies and telecommunications which allow distant operations to be linked together will create an industrial system that is increasingly competitive and places a premium on speed and market responsiveness.

One of the major container ports in the world and one of the largest intermodal rail yards in the country are located in northeastern New Jersey, within one hundred miles of central Connecticut. A major intermodal yard with connections to the west is located just over the State line in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Given the close proximity of these intermodal facilities to points in Connecticut, it is highly probable that a high percentage of commercial freight shipments originating in or destined for Connecticut will continue to be moved within the State by truck.

To assist Connecticut companies in competing effectively in global, national and regional markets, the State of Connecticut must maintain and improve its highway system, particularly highway access to both in-state and out-of-state ports, airports and rail freight intermodal facilities, to enable the companies to ship and receive goods as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

4. INCREASING DEMAND FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AS A RESULT OF WELFARE REFORM

Federal and State welfare reform legislation passed in 1996 and 1997 imposed limitations on the number of months that individuals could collect welfare benefits and required welfare recipients to seek jobs. These limitations and requirements have increased the demand for public transportation to child care facilities and areas of employment because many of the welfare recipients in Connecticut do not own or have the use of an automobile. This demand for transportation to work is occurring at a time when increasing numbers of jobs are relocating to or being created in suburban and rural areas and the work hours of many of the available jobs do not correspond to existing fixed-route bus schedules.

In response to the need to provide transit-dependent individuals with greater access to jobs within and outside the central cities, the Department of Transportation, as part of a cooperative "Access to Jobs" effort involving the State Department of Social Services, the Department of Labor and many local and regional partners, has extended certain bus routes to areas with concentrations of employment and expanded the hours of service, where feasible, on other bus routes to better correspond with the work shift hours of employers on the bus routes. But, the locations and/or work hours of many jobs make it financially impossible to provide public transportation to all persons who need it. To efficiently and economically meet the job-related mobility needs of transit-dependent individuals, with limited transportation funding for such efforts, will continue to be one of the State's major challenges.

5. MOBILITY & SAFETY NEEDS OF OLDER PERSONS AS DRIVERS, PASSENGERS AND PEDESTRIANS

The upcoming change in demographics is significant. In 1988 12 percent of the nation's population was 65 and older. In 1994 15 percent of the licensed operators in Connecticut were 65 and older. By 2020 17 percent of the State's population will be 65 or older, and almost half of these older persons will be 75 or older (see Figure III-6).

In 1986 the national Transportation Research Board (TRB) initiated a study about the needs and problems of older drivers. A committee of experts was appointed to review the transportation system and recommend steps toward improving the mobility and safety of older persons as drivers, passengers and pedestrians.

Some months later, Congress included in the Surface Transportation Act of 1987 a request for "A comprehensive study and investigation of: 1) problems which may inhibit the safety and mobility of older drivers using the nation's roads; and 2) means of addressing these problems." As a result, "Transportation in an Aging Society: Improving Mobility and Safety for Older Persons" was published in 1988. The study's findings are as follows:

- Mobility is essential to the quality of life of older persons, and the automobile is the primary means of meeting that mobility need. More than 80 percent of trips by those 65 and over are made in automobiles today, and this percentage is increasing.

- Most older drivers have good driving records. Up through age 75, most older drivers appear to perform as well as middle-aged ones. After about age 75, older drivers are about twice as likely to be involved in a crash on a per-mile-driven basis.
- Older persons are among the most vulnerable to injury in motor vehicle crashes. Vehicle occupants 65 and older are more than three times more likely to die than a 20-year old occupant from serious injuries of equal severity.
- In general, visual and cognitive performance on driving-related tasks diminishes with age. At the same time, older people are very different from each other.
- Because age is a poor predictor of performance, age alone should not be the basis for restricting or withholding driver's licenses.
- Sign visibility and maintenance standards, assumptions about performance used in intersection design and traffic operations, and vehicle crashworthiness standards fail to account for the needs and capabilities of older persons using the roadway system.
- The population of older persons who are able to live in their homes but who are unable to drive is growing. Better and more efficient specialized transportation service will be needed for this group to allow them to maintain their mobility and independence.
- Too little research is underway that could improve the mobility and safety of older persons, and research responsibilities are scattered across several different federal agencies.

Since study's findings were published a considerable amount of research has been, and continues to be, conducted. The research is providing more insight into the needs of older drivers and the types of measures that tend to facilitate their use of the streets and highways.

The findings of the aforementioned study stimulated efforts in the State of Connecticut to better understand and consider in the decision-making processes of appropriate State agencies, the mobility needs of this population group. In 1996 the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation requiring the Commissioner of Transportation, in consultation with the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, to develop and submit by January 1998 a plan to facilitate road use in the state by elderly motor vehicle operators. In developing the plan, the Departments of Transportation and Motor Vehicles looked for and are implementing cost-effective measures that have the potential to have a meaningful impact. This plan is discussed in Chapter V. Some measures can be implemented today and will have an immediate benefit, while others take longer to implement and have a beneficial impact. In general, measures that are intended to aid the older person will benefit people of all ages.

The demands to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists will increase as the state's elderly population ages and traffic volumes on roads in suburban and rural towns increase due to significant increases in the number jobs in the suburbs, increases in population and the increases in "suburb-to-suburb" commutes,. Specifically, there will be more requests to widen roadway shoulders and to add sidewalks, stop signs, crosswalks and traffic signals. In some areas there will be increasing demand to adjust traffic signals to give pedestrians more time to cross busy roads and /or to enable sight-impaired individuals to see more easily or hear when it is safe to cross the roads. ConnDOT will need to work cooperatively with the towns and local residents to address pedestrians' mobility needs on state-maintained roads while minimizing impediments to vehicle

traffic flow. Limited funds for maintaining and expanding transportation services and facilities coupled with increasing congestion on urban and suburban roads means that coordination of land use and transportation planning will become increasingly important as means of meeting the mobility needs of pedestrians and transit-dependent individuals in Connecticut.

6. REQUIREMENTS FOR FISCALLY CONSTRAINED PLANS: TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS' FOCUS ON EXISTING SYSTEMS

As part of the transportation planning process, each of Connecticut's fifteen regional planning organizations (RPOs) has an intricate part in the planning of transportation and in the development of transportation programs. (Their role in this process is discussed in Chapter II. THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS.) The ISTEA and TEA 21 regulations require that the development of long-range plans include a financial plan that demonstrates how the MPO's long-range plan can be implemented and indicates resources from public and private sources *that are reasonably expected to be made available* to carry out the plan. This requirement was inserted in the regulations to comply with the congressional intent that transportation plans be more "realistic." In addition, priority is to be given to the maintenance and operation of the existing system.

The Department developed regional funding allocations to serve as the basis for the Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Planning Agencies to develop their long-range plans. The funding allocations were not a commitment of funding by the State, but the best estimate of the level of future funding that each region could expect over a twenty year period.

In conformity with the ISTEA regulations and the Department's goals, the first priority in the development of long-range plans is to provide sufficient resources to maintain the existing system in a state of good repair. An analysis of current plans and past improvement programs indicated that at least sixty percent of all funds will be needed to maintain the transportation system. These funds will be used for capital reconstruction projects such as repaving roadways, bridge repair or replacement, and any other form of reconstruction in place. Costs for these activities are related mainly to the extent of the system and, to a lesser degree, system usage. Therefore, an approximate cost estimate was developed for maintaining the existing system based on lane miles and vehicle miles of travel, with lane miles having three times the weight of miles of travel. The remaining forty percent of funds will be used to enhance safety, improve mobility, increase system productivity or promote economic growth. Fund allocations to address these needs were based on levels of congestion, that is, congested vehicle miles of travel, and system usage, i.e., vehicle miles of travel. In this case, congested vehicle miles of travel were assigned three times the weight of miles of travel.

Transit capital improvement estimates were based on the Department's latest Capital Project Management Plan. This Plan consists of the projects and estimated costs required to bring the existing public transit systems to a state of good repair, to maintain them in that condition, and to replace rolling stock as life cycles dictate. Additional funding sources would have to be identified for any proposed transit projects, including operating costs, not included in the Plan.

B. TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental issues continue to play a major role in the development and direction of the State's transportation program. An increased awareness of the interrelationship between the environment and the Department's infrastructure program has been demonstrated not only by the Department and the regulatory agencies, but also by State and Federal lawmakers and the public as a whole. While few new areas of environmental concerns emerged in recent years, the emphasis placed upon state and federal regulatory programs increased. Environmental issues, especially those of regional air quality and water resources, remain a powerful driving force behind the planning, design and construction of transportation projects and programs.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) has responded to the evolving climate in a number of ways. On an institutional basis, ConnDOT's Mission, Principles and Values Statement notes the Department's sensitivity to the competing goals and values that make up Connecticut's quality of life. As a result, the Principles Statement specifically makes an affirmative statement that the Department will seek to protect and enhance the natural environment as transportation improvements are developed. The process of project and program development and the meeting of environmental requirements increasingly has been more open to outside input. This has been driven by the need to balance competing views. In addition various official ConnDOT policy statements on environmental issues have also been instituted, from recycling to water quality and public involvement.

Transportation and environmental agencies have developed a variety of processes to make the environmental and permit reviews for projects affecting wetlands more efficient. One such process utilizes the monthly meetings that ConnDOT holds to discuss water resources permits and projects with both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (ConnDEP).

The Department, in consultation with interested parties, will continue to integrate environmental sensitivity into the development process. Flexibility will be maintained to best respond to the increasingly complex and, all too often, conflicting laws, regulations and guidance issued to protect the environment and increase public input in the decision-making process.

Additional effort will be needed to cooperatively further streamline environmental processes and to continue the improvement in the working relationships with regulatory agencies. Technical issues, such as habitat fragmentation, must be addressed with all agencies at the state and federal level. Further education of all parties, whether in the goals and objectives of the regulatory agencies or in the design and construction techniques, is imperative.

Transportation and environmental issues interact on many levels. Two key areas, air quality and water resources, have experienced significant developments in recent years that will affect transportation policy for years to come. It has been said that the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) are the most significant development in transportation policy in decades. The interrelationship of clean air and transportation planning is one of the most important developments in federal environmental policy for the 1990's.

1. AIR QUALITY

On August 15, 1997 the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection (EPA) published the “Transportation Conformity Rule Amendments: Flexibility and Streamlining; Final Rule.” The Conformity Rule established the requirements that will insure that the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and Transportation Plans (TPs) conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP). Connecticut is currently developing state regulations which will define, in state law, agency responsibilities and will insure both a high level of interagency cooperation and opportunity for the public participation.

The SIP process, administered by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (ConnDEP), is directed at attaining air quality standards. Air pollution comes from the following three primary sources: (1) motor vehicles (mobile highway sources); (2) non highway equipment such as motor boats, lawn and garden equipment (mobile non highway sources); and (3) utility fuel combustion, storage tanks, and use of solvents and consumer products (stationary point and area sources).

As part of the SIP process ConnDEP is working closely with the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and ConnDOT on developing a workable, enhanced motor vehicle inspection and maintenance program which meets the goals of the State’s overall SIP plan.

Mobile Source emissions levels from the latest approved Conformity analysis are shown below:

Year	Ozone Area	VOC	NOx
1990	Severe	39,462	50,160
	Serious	114,511	158,007
1995	Severe	18,810	41,379
	Serious	58,807	131,257
1996	Severe	18,112	40,107
	Serious	56,932	126,860
1999	Severe	15,126	33,837
	Serious	47,900	107,933
2007	Severe	7,968	22,098
	Serious	25,766	70,817
2015	Severe	7,148	20,139
	Serious	23,120	65,287

*Figures are estimates based on EPA’s Mobile Model.

Table I- 1: Approved Conformity Analysis Emission Levels (in kilograms/day)

In 1996, VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) emissions from transportation sources were less than half of what they were in 1990: NOx (oxides of nitrogen) emissions have been reduced by 20%. By the year 2015, VOC from transportation sources will have been reduced by 80% and NOx by 60%. As additional strategies and technologies are developed, it is anticipated that further reductions in emissions will occur.

Highway mobile source emissions are being dramatically reduced. These reductions are playing a primary role in Connecticut’s SIP process and in achieving clean air.

2. WATER RESOURCES

Obtaining environmental permits for transportation projects is a major concern for those participating in the transportation development process. The majority of transportation projects have required at least one environmental permit (most specifically water resources permits).

The environmental permit process, depending on the complexity of the project, can be arduous. Simple projects can sometimes require an extraordinary amount of time to be spent on addressing environmental concerns. A tremendous amount of information (with the concomitant time and effort required to prepare that information) is needed to fuel the permit process. Myriad viewpoints must be addressed, and, hopefully, a consensus will be reached, so that a permit may be issued. The actual obtaining of a permit, however, does not, in and of itself, end the process of transportation and environment. After the permit is issued, there is oversight of the construction phase of the project and compliance with the sometimes extensive permit conditions and requirements. The conditions and requirements that must be met during this phase are becoming increasingly complex and stringent.

Environmental regulations require that great care be taken to arrive at courses of action that minimize impacts to environmental resources. The process of obtaining environmental permit approvals can be long and arduous, and not necessarily successful. Water resource permits or approvals typically required for a major project can include a U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's (Corps) Section 404 permit for dredge or fill material placed in wetlands, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (ConnDEP) Inland Wetlands and Watercourses, Tidal, Dam, Flood Plain Management, Stream Channel Encroachment Line, Water Diversion, and Structures and Dredging in tidal, coastal and navigable waters permits or approvals and others.

There are a variety of ConnDOT policies relative to environmental issues. The Department strives to look, in an evolving and iterative manner, at environmental aspects of project or program, from the inception point on, so that issues can be recognized and addressed as early as possible. Above and beyond those mentioned in the Principles Statement, there are important items such as the Environmental Compliance Specification, Section 1.10, which, with the Department's Standard Specification, Form 815, provides specific policy on a broad range of environmental issues during the construction phase of projects and maintenance activities. These are part of every Departmental construction contract.

The Department takes these challenges very seriously as the stakes are high. Legal responsibilities must be met. Good government and good decisions are a must. In program development and project planning, design and construction, the Department will continue to improve the way in which environmental factors, especially water resources, are woven into the fabric of the development process. Considerable time and effort have been focused on environmental issues. ConnDOT will continue to adhere to, and refine as necessary, its policies on environmental issues. Consensus, where prudent and feasible, and proactive, rather than reactive, action will be sought.