

**COMMISSION ON FISCAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
TRANSPORTATION AND CITIES PUBLIC HEARING**

MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 2018

9:00 AM-12:00 PM

150 YORK STREET, NEW HAVEN, CT

I. CONVENE MEETING:

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by commission member Bruce Alexander.

Mr. Alexander explained that today's meeting would cover the topic of cities & transportation. The goal of the meeting-making recommendations and coming to focused conclusions about the most critical points concerning cities & transportation as they relate to the overall fiscal stability and economic growth of the state.

II. REMINDER OF PUBLIC REMARKS OPPORTUNITY:

Mr. Alexander reminded members of the public that they can submit their comments in writing at any time to fintestimony@cga.ct.gov . He further explained that members of the commission will give all comments consideration as they deliberate and prepare their final report prior to their March 1st, 2018 deadline.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

TONI HARP, MAYOR OF NEW HAVEN

Mayor Harp discussed the following ideas as solutions to improve travel in Connecticut:

- A revised approach by CT Transit & re-routed Bus Lines .
- Add concentric orbits around downtown New Haven to match workers with jobs & shoppers with stores.
- New Haven will benefit from an intermodal transportation center at an enhanced Union Station; buses & shuttles to meet trains; connect New Haven to Shoreline, Fairfield County, Boston, New York, & points beyond.
- The Tweed New Haven Airport must become another state-wide transportation priority to provide convenience to statewide residence, relieve congestion, bring executives & more jobs into the center of state.
- Statewide 1 GB Internet Access is necessary. CT needs to embrace the 21st century & make the internet as readily available to our residence as running water & electricity.

- Mayor Harp expressed a strong need, and even complete dependence on, a consistent stream of income from the state:

The Board & Mayor Harp engaged in a discussion about possible streams of income they could create from existing sources.

SENATOR TIM LARSON

Supported the topic of Tweed New Haven Airport with a presentation and discussed trends that indicate they are heading in a positive direction. In his opinion it is critical that Tweed Airport get a 6,000 foot runway.

MAYOR OF HARTFORD, LUKE BRONIN

Mayor Bronin believes that we need to make our cities a priority; we need our cities to be strong, vibrant, competitive, cultural-hubs in Connecticut; Connecticut struggles to retain and attract talent. He further expressed that the root of our cities' problems is that we have built them on a base that is too small to support the level of services that are required at a tax rate that is competitive. Hartford offers services that are non-taxed to the state: hospitals, burning trash, sewage, social services, non-profits. There is an overly-reliant dependence on property taxes.

According to Mayor Bronin one of the state's greatest opportunities is that we are in between Boston & New York where people are pricing out. They are looking for places to go.

Areas that need development according to Mayor Bronin: tolls are long overdue, investments overdue in our bridges, the power of rail; shorter commuting lines, importance of connecting our state to Boston/NYC & to our cities and large towns internally, job training is a critical need

To conclude, Mayor Bronin expressed that he does not feel it is fair that when one is given impossible expectations that they should be held accountable for failure.

KEVIN DILLON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CONNECTICUT AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Link to Written Testimony:

http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/2017/1205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Connecticut%20Airport%20Authority%20Testimony.pdf

Mr. Dillon led an engaged discussion about Connecticut Airports & how the state is growing a healthier transportation network. He also addressed the competitive landscape & what we are doing to remain competitive in the industry. He shared successes & challenges they have faced over the years.

Mr. Dillon engaged in conversation about the Airport Authority's structure and how they operate; discussed areas of opportunity & how the state can help them to continue on their path.

Short term & Long term recommendations: Allow us to continue to fulfill the mission we were created to fulfill: to operate as an independent aviation authority.

OZ GRIEBEL, FORMER PRESIDENT & CEO OF METROHARTFORD ALLIANCE

Mr. Griebel agrees that we need to make sure the airport authority remains an independent entity. We need to evolve into international service. His recommendations are detailed below.

1. Form a Transportation Strategy Board- Establish a board combining the private sector, the public sector, & executive branches. The job of this board is to come up with plans and make recommendations regarding transportation matters in Connecticut.
2. Get the state out of property ownership & immediately arrange sale/lease-back arrangements.
3. Look hard at tax-exempt properties; hospitals, universities, ect.
4. Look hard at the COGs moving forward, get the cost down on real estate & equipment, lower the mill rate-this is the greatest expense to businesses

TAREK SOBH, DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING, UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT

Link to Testimony:

http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Tarek%20Sobh,%20University%20of%20Bridgeport%20Testimony.pdf

Mr. Sobh discussed the importance of keeping engineering & technology graduates in the state; about 50% are leaving after graduation. We need to entice & incentivize this amazing generation to stay in the state of Connecticut, and pull in more people from other states to move here. He further believes that the state needs to adapt degrees to the job market that is quickly changing- "we are literally preparing students for job titles that no longer exist." Creating an exciting & supportive environment for entrepreneurs is key to improving the state's economy as a whole.

The state also needs to better prepare students for the 21st century; there are fields that exist today for which there are no degrees. There is a need to focus & encourage technology & entrepreneurial study and for state & local support to grow these departments and create an exciting environment.

He also encouraged the commission to look at new technologies in regards to transportation

JENNIFER WIDNESS, PRESIDENT OF THE CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

Link to written testimony:

http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Jennifer%20Widness,%20President,%20Connecticut%20Conference%20of%20Independent%20Colleges%20Testimony.pdf

Ms. Widness echoed the need to encourage students to remain in Connecticut; a lot of students today want to be in a place where they do not need a car. We need to connect colleges to downtown locations & other attractions in the state; this is what students want. She remarked on the importance of retaining talent in the state; half are leaving the state.

Her presentation centered around suggested improvements in the state's transportation, cities, and taxation which the CCIC feels are necessary to continue growing Connecticut's economy.

MATT FULTA, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CT METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Mr. Fulta discussed the importance of updating our transportation system to make Connecticut a central destination instead of a "pass thru state" as it is currently known.

PATRICIA DILLON, STATE REPRESENTATIVE, 92nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Rep. Dillon testified to the need to be more cautious and start examining organizations instead of giving money to companies; we need to look at the system's infrastructure and where that money is going. According to Rep. Dillion the state needs to be giving money to organizations who want to be successful, and not just paying them off to stick around.

Rep. Dillon feels that it is very strange that we almost completely cut spending to non-profit organizations and yet give money to corporations. Rep. Dillon feels like a lot of inappropriate investments and decisions are being made and have been made at the state level of government. She then discussed internal infrastructure and concluded the state of Connecticut has a poorly paid part-time legislature. Because of this, we are not performing optimally, there are oversights, and a lack of accountability across the board.

JOSEPH SCULLEY, PRESIDENT OF MOTOR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

Link to Written Testimony:

http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Joseph%20Sculley,%20President,%20MTAC%20Testimony.pdf

Mr. Sculley shared statistics with the commission concerning the importance of the trucking industry and why we need to keep them running, business as usual, as they are often referred to

as the backbone of the economy; 85% of communities in CT depend on trucks to deliver their goods. He also discussed the significant hike in transportation taxes in the last 10 years and how much money Connecticut truckers have to pay in comparison to everyone else, including what out of state truckers have to pay on top of registration fees.

According to Mr. Sculley state law does not allow Connecticut to set up a road of fixed-rate tolls, and Connecticut's strategy for reducing congestion, "The Value Pricing Pilot Project", where we congestion price people out of the high way by making it too expensive to even drive there; a right we already pay for with existing taxes. He recommended an audit of the D.O.T.

He further questioned what he referred to as the "unapproved UCONN FastTrack route" stating that this was implemented without discussion or approval.

Commission members responded to Mr. Sculley's shocking findings by stating that they "would be happy to respond to the report and that they should clarify that as soon as possible so that the facts are out." Several members and Mr. Sculley engaged in discussion about tolls and the grandfather provision and the "value pricing pilot project."

DON SHUBERT, PRESIDENT OF THE CONNECTICUT CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

Mr. Shubert expressed a need for an immediate revenue stream and short term measures, while also implementing long-term action to protect fiscal stability of the state. According to Mr. Shubert, without a revenue stream we will experience service cuts, tax increases, and a big cut to the states capital programs. We have to think both short term & long term; fixing the situation this year is not good enough, we need to solve the problem long term, we need to start looking 5-10 years out instead of "band-aid: fixes.

MICHAEL PASSERO, MAYOR OF NEW LONDON

Mr. Passero testified that New London is a thriving city and can be an important driver for the state's economy. He expressed a need for a source of income as New London has a lot of projects designed, planned, and shovel ready, but they have had to put them on hold because revenue streams have been cut. Loss of jobs, contracts, and a failing infrastructure have resulted from such issues.

He also encouraged expansion into the COGs of southeast Connecticut where they have a very active and successful COGs.

The Mayor explained that New London is a distressed municipality but not because of any failure on their part, but rather because of mistakes made at the state level of government.

He further discussed the city's responsible spending by pointing out that in the last 5 years spending has grown by just 1.5%, in 10 years, only 18.5%; in comparison to other municipalities

that have increased in the last 5 years from 20-30%, and as much as 80-100% in the last 10 years.

RICK LYNN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NORTHWEST HILLS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Link to written testimony:

http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Rick%20Lynn,%20Northwest%20Hills%20CoG%20Testimony.pdf

Mr. Lynn testified to his concern with the loss of town-aid road funding which is typically used to support the maintenance of local roads. Mr. Lynn encouraged pushing this to the general assembly; “we need to do something for the special transportation fund.”

He went on to urge the commission to recommend keeping local property taxes under control and to support the restoring of funds to the Regional Performance Incentive Grant Program.

Mr. Lynn engaged in a discussion with commission members concerning giving regional centers a priority in regards to state funding for economic and community development programs. He pointed out that the city of Torrington should be given priority to funding under the urban act program. He also expressed support for efforts by CCM, COST and area towns to relieve the burden of unfunded state-mandates.

The commission requested a list of additional state-mandates they would like examined:

1. Increase the prevailing wage threshold to Rehabilitation to \$400-\$500K
2. Allow towns to place their public notices online rather than requiring to place in newspaper
- 3.

JOHN PICARD, FINANCIAL ADVISER AND FORMER MAYOR OF WEST HAVEN

Mr. Picard spoke in support of Senator Larson’s comments concerning Tweed Airport. He also encouraged the commission to have a meeting with mayors and selectmen from across the state in order to gain their insight on possible solutions. He advised that we put our intellectual capital together and focus on growing start-up businesses as they would go a long way in helping the state of Connecticut’s fiscal stability and economic growth.

GINNY KOZLOWSKI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF NEW HAVEN

Link to written testimony:

http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Ginny%20Kozlowski,%20CEO,%20Economic%20Development%20Corporation%20of%20New%20Haven%20Testimony.pdf

Ms. Kozlowski explained that the New Haven region is home to strong and growing sectors of the economy, notably healthcare, bioscience, higher education and advanced manufacturing. She pointed out that these are essential sectors which should be included in the proposed strategy in a manner consistent with the region's comprehensive economic development strategy. She encouraged commission members to consider how to leverage other established economic drivers, such as the hospitality industry. With over a million visitors annually to New Haven, this sector plays a crucial economic role in the entire region.

RICK DUNNE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NAUGATUCK VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Link to Written Testimony:

http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Rick%20Dunne,%20Naugatuck%20Valley%20CoG%20Testimony.pdf

Mr. Dunne's testimony was focused around two main points concerning improving the state's economic growth:

1. The importance of creating a convenient infrastructure that meets the needs of both business and people.
2. The need to completely separate the revenue stream for building, operating and maintaining the state's major transportation system from the normal appropriations process of the General Assembly and the state's general fund.

MATTHEW NEMERSON, PRESIDENT, CONNECTICUT TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Mr. Nemerson's testimony addressed Connecticut's leadership at the state level, in towns, and at universities-corporations needs to start coming together purposefully to meet and strategize ideas. He also expressed thoughts on the efficiency of our cities compared to other places, and the level of crime. He also shared his ideas that we need to be strategically responsible in our decision making and he also discussed ideas for civic infrastructure in our cities and towns.

SAMUEL GOLD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LOWER CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Mr. Gold discussed the success story of Albany, New York; going from a struggling entity to a thriving and energetic place to live with a well-maintained transportation system, flourishing economy; a place where young people are flocking to. He suggested that Connecticut might consider emulating some of these qualities. In his opinion the state needs to connect the dots between transportation, housing, and employment; more housing is needed closer to employment centers. He also stated that businesses are locating to areas with lower mill-rates versus higher.

He went on to discuss the pros and cons of regionalism as employees have expressed a desire to work with surrounding towns; there are a lot of issues with services. He concluded that we have an exodus not only with students graduating or going away to college, but the state is also losing retirees and senior citizens.

LEO CANTY, BOARD MEMBER, 1000 FRIENDS OF CONNECTICUT

Written Testimony 1:

[http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Leo%20Canty%20Testimony%20\(1\).pdf](http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Leo%20Canty%20Testimony%20(1).pdf)

Written Testimony 2:

[http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Leo%20Canty%20Testimony%20\(2\).pdf](http://cga.ct.gov/fin/tfs/20171205_Commission%20on%20Fiscal%20Stability%20and%20Economic%20Growth/20180129/Leo%20Canty%20Testimony%20(2).pdf)

Mr. Canty provided testimony concerning suggestions for reforming the Teachers Retirement System to achieve the same budgetary stability as provided by the State Employee Retirement System. In addition he also provided commentary in connection with public retirement funds, the need for this group to think both in the long and short term, the importance of looking at the economy and how it is changing on all fronts, and the significance of “giving CT a raise”- good pay benefits, healthcare, and pensions are a foundation for a great state.

**DOUG HAUSLADEN, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION,
TRAFFIC AND PARKING, CITY OF NEW HAVEN**

Mr. Hausladen discussed the challenge the state is facing with losing millennials as this age group is starting families and leaving the state due to expense and education. He also expressed the importance of keeping morality and education at the forefront of our priorities in Connecticut. He expressed concerns about the following topics: cutting public financing, cutting transparency at CT-N, and not having conversations about impartial re-districting to get over this economic stalemate we have been in for the last 15 years. He also pointed out that CT Fast Track is a wildly successful solution that we should invest more in as a state.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 P.M. by Chairman Alexander.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate M. Sulick

Assistant Clerk